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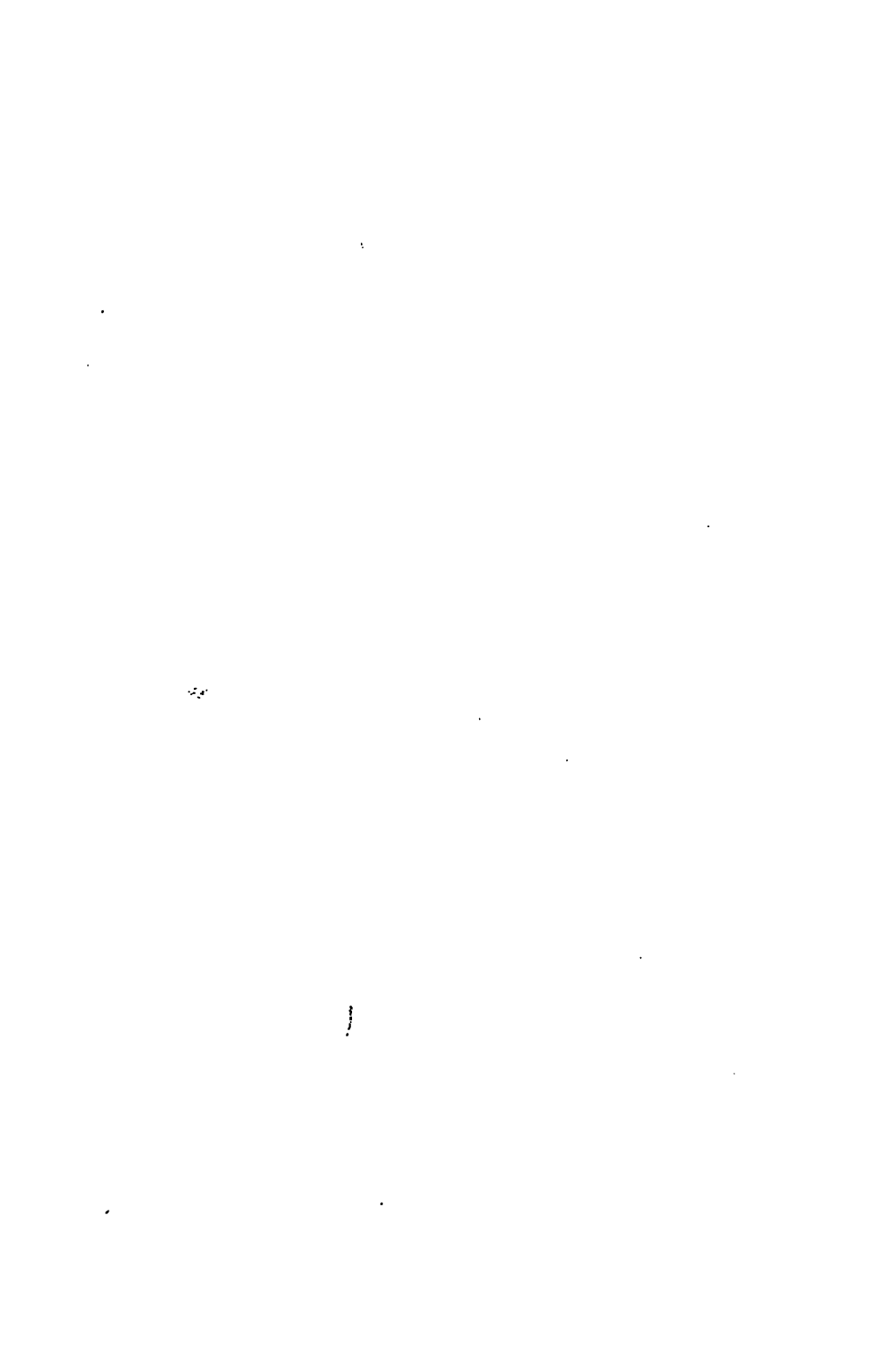


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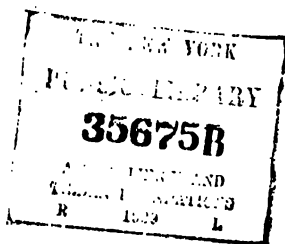
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TO THE
EDITORS OF THE HOME JOURNAL,
GEORGE PERRY AND MORRIS PHILLIPS,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, IN RECOGNITION
OF THEIR
SCHOLARLY ATTAINMENTS,
THEIR
EXQUISITE LITERARY TASTE,
THEIR
STERLING INTEGRITY,
AND THEIR
CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

W O R 19 FEB '36

BEVERLY.

THE DISGRACE OF NEW YORK STATE— SING SING.

 HIS chapter is not numbered. It is the revelation of a horrible truth. Hence, it is separated from the chapters of fiction, that, whatever merciless blows the critics may deal the romance, they may, as men and citizens of the Great Republic, allow this chapter to stand as the naked and disgraceful truth for the consideration of thoughtful and Christian men. Boast no more, oh! Americans, of the wisdom, gentleness, forbearance, and humanity of our people and our laws, until this great disgrace is wiped away from the escutcheon of the Empire State. This chapter is the truth. To-day similar cruelties are frequent at Sing Sing. This chapter is independent, to a great extent, of the fiction which commences with chapter *One*. One incident, however, herein related, is essential to the final understanding and development of the plot. But the chapter is a true and faithful picture of Sing Sing, one of the State prisons of New York.

THE TORTURE CHAMBER.

A young man, sentenced to imprisonment at hard labor for killing a drayman who had driven against his own cart in a crowded thoroughfare, the blow being struck with one of the wooden bars or uprights of his cart during the altercation which

ensued upon the collision, was kneeling down upon the floor and begging for mercy :

"Don't, for God's sake, torture me to-day. I will work to-morrow. My heart pains me so that I really can't work. Something is the matter here, right here." The young man placed his hand over his heart.

"Enough of that, sir," was the rough response of the keeper. "You tried that game yesterday, and I let you off."

"Then send for the doctor if you don't believe me," was the appeal of the convict. "You know I never shirked work before yesterday."

"Come here," called out the keeper to his two assistants. The officials advanced from the wall against which they had leaned while watching the young man's refusal to work and his appeal for mercy. As they moved out from the wall, one of them displaced an iron instrument of torture which hung there, and it fell with a clanking sound to the stone flagging of the prison. It is called, in the vernacular of the prison, the "collar and crown."

"Pick that up," shouted the keeper ; "we don't want that for him. We'll give him stronger remedies for heart disease."

One assistant took up the "collar and crown" and replaced it upon the hook on the wall, while the other continued on until he stood beside the keeper. The latter cast his eyes along the wall upon the various implements of torture, until they rested upon the "back handcuff," an exquisite contrivance for forcing the head and shoulders forward and drawing up the arms behind and the lower part of the body into a cramped posture. This was evidently too gentle a punishment for a young man who had for one day and a half refused to work, for the keeper's eyes ran farther along the wall until they settled upon a hook attached to the end of a rope which dangled from a pulley in the ceiling.

"That's the remedy for heartache," he said, grimly. "Look at that, sir." He was addressing the convict, still upon his *knees*. "Now, will you work or hang up there?"



The young man looked in the direction the keeper pointed, and shuddered when he saw the suspended hook glittering in mid-air. He did not appreciate the full horror of the torture, for he knew not how or where the hook would grapple him. Still he saw that in some way he was to be painfully suspended between the floor and the ceiling.

"Oh! for God's sake, sir, give me time to get well, and I'll work," cried the poor wretch.

"String him up," said the torturer hoarsely to his assistants. The two sprang forward at the command, and, throwing the young man upon his back in spite of his struggles, held him down, and the operation of torture began. One of them produced a stout whip-cord, with a slip-knot at either end, while the other grasped the convict's hands and held out the thumbs which were immediately thrust into the loops, and the knot was drawn taut below the first joint. Then they dragged him along the floor to a point directly under the suspended hook, to which the cord on his thumbs was immediately attached. At the word "ready," given by one of the assistants, the keeper commenced to haul away at the other end of the rope, and the other assistant united his efforts to those of his superior, to raise the convict from the floor *by his thumbs*. He was soon hoisted from his feet, and was dangling in mid-air, his whole weight hanging by his thumbs alone. A shiver ran over him. He ground his teeth together, but uttered no cry. Every instant the distortion of his face grew more fearful; the eyes began to redden and glare. A quivering ran over his entire frame. The agony deepened. His thumbs and the sinews on the inside of the wrists seemed to him to be drawing out from his body. He turned around dangling in the air in his agony, and a moan escaped him. Then his arms began to draw out from the shoulder sockets, and the muscles of his back strained fearfully. Again the moan from the victim.

"Will you work now, sir," demanded the keeper.

"Mercy! mercy!" The words seemed to gurggle in the young man's throat.

"Will you work?" again demanded the relentless torturer.

"Too sick, too sick," gurgled out the response from the poor wretch.

"Perhaps he *is* sick," suggested one of the assistants, seeing how violently the convict commenced to struggle, as if the death agony had seized him. Every spasm and struggle only doubled his torture, and groans came fast from him now. He spun around in mid-air, so violently did he struggle; and his face was becoming hideous in the blood which suffused it.

"Will you work?" demanded the keeper.

"I can't," was gasped out by the fainting convict, and then he became motionless.

They lowered him to the floor and poured water upon his head and face, for he had fainted under the torture.

"What an obstinate devil he is, to be sure," exclaimed the head torturer, contemplating him as he lay motionless upon the stone flagging of the room, and holding over him the silver watch by which he knew that the young man had been suspended six minutes, an unusual duration for one "hoist."

After a few minutes consciousness returned. He opened his eyes upon the trio of demons and was greeted by the remark, "Now we hoist you again unless you promise to work."

"God knows I can't," said the convict faintly.

"Up with him again," shouted the keeper.

Once more they pulled at the rope, and the tortured body hung suspended by the thumbs. Again were repeated the horrible spasms of the sufferer, and violent shrieks of agony rang out upon the prison. At this instant a door flew open, and another keeper entered the torture-room, followed by a white-haired and intellectual-browed gentleman. He was an elderly man, but his presence was commanding, and his conductor was evidently determined to exhibit the highest courtesy, for he spoke deferentially and seemed to anticipate every interrogatory.

"This is the punishment room," the conductor said.

"*Eh!* what is that hanging in the air?" exclaimed the ven-

erable visitor, his dark eyes fixing upon the suspended convict with a glance of horror. Without waiting for a response, he advanced with his quick military step nearer, and realizing the tragedy, exclaimed in startling and authoritative tones :

"Cut that man down, instantly ! What the devil are you all about here ? Is this the Inquisition ? Cut him down, I say !"

The keeper, who was still holding on to the rope, said, half-defiantly :

"Who is this man that orders us about ?"

"I am Senator Delancy, of the State legislature, sent here to inspect this prison," said the same decided voice again. "Cut that poor fellow down !"

They lowered him then by the pulley, and he fell upon the floor. The venerable and majestic Senator crossed over to the convict, and stooping over his trembling body said,

"Poor fellow ! poor fellow ! you have fallen into the hands of demons."

"The law allows us to use the thumb-pulley, Senator," interposed the keeper, who had escorted him into the torture-room.

"It does, does it ? Then we shall see that this infernal law is repealed. Why, man, this is not the land of Bomba. Bring this poor fellow some brandy. I will pay for it. Look at him, you precious set of scoundrels ; he is half dead. Can you speak, convict ?"

The young man looked up from his crouching posture upon the flags, and said :

"I thank you, sir. God bless you, sir !"

"For what were they torturing you, young man ?"

"I wouldn't work. I couldn't work, sir. I am sick. My heart hurts me for two days. Oh ! if you hadn't stopped it I should have died."

"What is your name ?"

"William Burke," replied the convict. Then his head sank upon his shoulder, and he fell down fainting again. For a few moments it seemed doubtful if he would ever return to consciousness. They brought him to at last, and then he was


assisted away to his cell ; and, at the suggestion, or rather the command of the Senator, the physician of the prison was sent to him.

Upon Senator Delancy's return to the legislature, he laid before that body a carefully drawn statement of the details of the instruments of torture employed upon refractory convicts at Sing Sing. He exerted all the wonderful arts of his oratory to have them abolished. But so tinged were the minds of men with the cruel maxims of state policy in the old world, that they allowed the tortures to continue at Sing Sing. And there, to-day, in the Christian year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-two, the *thumb-pulley* is in full operation, and the number "pullied" yearly is two hundred and eight.

CHAPTER I.

*"The angels know how the heart was wrung, for love must claim its own ;
But the foeman saw on the kingly brow no trace of the hidden moan."*

Marie Bushnell Williams.

HE midnight storm was at its height. Such impenetrable gloom, such frenzy of the wind, such torrents of rain and sleet could not long continue. For hours had they reigned supreme over the metropolis, driving all within doors, and causing a strange stillness in the uptown streets. Here, far away from theatres, and hotels, and places of refreshment, the only sound that met the ear was the distant tinkling of the bells on the horses of the avenue cars. The streets were ankle deep with snow, which muffled the usual clatter of human feet, and the corner lamps were hazy and dim in the touch of the rain and sleet. In the second story of a small brick house a lamp was standing close to the window-glass, its rays revealing to any passer-by the figure of a man leaning against the window. His forehead was pressed against

the glass and tears were streaming from his eyes. These tokens of human agony fell upon the window pane, and slowly rolled down, down its smooth inner surface, while the rain-drops dashed against the outer surface, and in unison with the tears rolled down the glass, as if to sympathize with the throes of human anguish. Alas! that the good God finds it necessary to wound and torture His children as that poor deserted heart was tortured in that hour of desolation. Some men are strong to suffer and make no sign. Others of a finer and more poetic texture find vent in tears, so helpless do they feel in the presence of a great agony. Grief bows them to the earth, so that literally they fall upon their faces and moan and weep until nature is exhausted. This poor, deserted wretch had arisen from such a prostration upon the floor of his room, and thinking the violence of his agony had passed from him for a time, had carried his lamp to the window, and rested his heated forehead upon the glass to cool it. But there the recollection of his loss and his desolation returned upon him, and he sobbed against the pane as if he were utterly destitute of all power and control over himself. Then, suddenly, with a start of indignation at the inhuman cruelty which had been practised upon him, he turned from the window and paced the room with the rapidity and the fierceness of a demon. His teeth were set together, his lips parted, and a hiss at intervals between them, told that his iron will was meditating murder. In the lonely room, with the storm beating against the windows, MacGregor swore vengeance. Cruelty had maddened him. The terrible blow had fallen upon him without warning. Two hours before, when he had gone out into the storm to purchase fuel for his house, his wife had raised her lips from her pretended sick bed to kiss him. Before he could reach his house again she had fled forever, taking his child with her.

MacGregor, startling as had been the blow which forever deprived him of a home, was not so unprepared for desolation as most men would have been. He *knew* that he would be deserted months before the event occurred. The surprise

related simply to the moment of the desertion. She had fled with his child in the very hour that she had professed the utmost affection and devotion to him. She had adopted the usual treachery of women. Like Judas, she betrayed with a kiss. He *knew* that she would leave him. He was gifted with a wonderful power. There never had been a calamity of his life whose approaching shadows he had not seen months before the reality. When the sky was clear and the sun shone forth brilliantly, he had often said to his heart: "In that quarter I see the storm. I shall struggle against it. Men will sneer at my foresight, but from that smooth sky shall burst the tempest." He never failed in his mental predictions. To men he never mentioned his gift of *second-sight*. But he possessed it, and he knew it. Twenty generations back he traced his pedigree to the seers of Scotland. One of those gifted masters of *second-sight* was a Scottish King. There were times in MacGregor's experience when, upon his long and beloved solitary walks, a sensation came over him that sudden supernatural transformations were going on in the cloud-land, towards which his eyes were so fond of gazing. The clouds fashioned themselves into the likenesses of future events, and what at those moments they foretold became for him ever afterwards axioms. He had seen, two years before this night on which he had been so cruelly abandoned, the clouds assume the likeness of a sun-dered family. He saw himself left in a house alone and his wife and child hurried off by her relatives. Farther and farther away floated the white-cloud wife and child, and they never came back to him.

And now, when the cruel reality had come two years subsequent to the vision, MacGregor stood alone in the storm-wrapped house, plotting the murder of the woman who had made his home desolate. But as he paced the silent room, where once had echoed the laughter of his child, where once the little darling of his heart had nestled close in his arms, and gone into the sweet and touching sleep of innocence and love, a sudden flash of the great power that slumbered in him warm-

ed him again, and in the midst of his bloody purposes and his fierce throes of will he saw another vision. Pausing in the midst of his wild walk, and hearing still the fierce beat of the wind-tossed rain upon his window panes, he saw out in the darkness of the street three figures in the air. His teeth unclenched, his lips closed, and his beating, murderer's heart grew calm. They were three female figures in the air, and about them seemed to be walls covered with Pompeiian forms and colors, which grew more distinct and definite the longer he gazed. And within the antique walls he saw himself, the deserted and desolate, standing alone in his agony. The three females were approaching him, and he noted upon their brows these symbols: The tallest wore a crown of laurel, and the shortest wore a wreath of brilliant scintillations. But upon the brow of the third, who was above the medium height of women, there sparkled these words in *scarlet fire*, "*Eternal Love*." The three glided nearer and nearer to him, but upon the face of one alone were his eyes fixed. And to his delight she smiled upon him, and taking the scarlet letters from her forehead she placed them in his hand. Instantly the vision disappeared, and he heard only the wild dash of the rain against his windows.

The deserted, lonely man fell upon his knees, and in accents of intense gratitude, blessed the holy name of God. "At last, oh! my God, the hungry, starving heart shall be satisfied. I await patiently Thy priceless gift. I know it will come to me. Farewell, wife and child. '*When the half-gods go the gods arrive*.'"

MacGregor had passed the age of thirty. He was a powerful man, symmetrically moulded, with gray eyes and brown hair. Looking into his eyes one would recognize the idealism which was a necessity of his being. He idealized everything which he loved. He was a man of varied gifts, an orator, a brilliant conversationist, a fine writer, and a natural-born leader of men. His voice was magnetic, and men quickly recognized him as an able and powerful champion of any cause which he

espoused. He had been for ten years a journalist, and the political paper he conducted was rapidly attaining the rank of first in influence and circulation. It was the property of a corporation which employed his pen at a liberal salary. He possessed no property, but had supported his wife and child upon the money thus regularly paid him. His family had lived comfortably. Luxuries were not warranted by his salary. His wife had long been dissatisfied that his income did not allow her to flourish in the fashionable circles of the metropolis. To her expressions of dissatisfaction in this regard he had always replied that a journalist must work diligently, and for many years, before he could hope to support his family in affluence. This did not satisfy her present demands to flourish among millionnaires, and hence she grew more discontented day by day. Her sarcasms and complaints regarding the dilatory character of his advances towards affluence finally worked upon his nervous and sensitive nature, and he retaliated upon her in words, chiding her for not being satisfied with the society of her husband and child until his pecuniary circumstances should improve. Diligence and patience in his profession could alone secure him an advance of salary from the owners of his paper. These family dissensions grew bitterer year by year, until most of the hours that he could devote to her society were made irksome by her complaints. Finally he withdrew into his sanctum altogether in the evenings, and devoted himself to the literary culture so essential to the man who aspires to the rank of a great journalist. The instant that his child, to whom he was devotedly attached, had been sent away to her little bed, he left the company of his wife and went into his study. Her conversation was fretful, and irritated him after his severe mental labors at the newspaper office. She might have averted this by devoting herself to entertain him, for he was attached to her, and would gladly have passed his entire evenings with her. But fretting and complaining exhausted him more than his mental labors, and so he gradually withdrew *into himself*. Then she retaliated by allowing a stranger to

become intimate with her, to escort her to boating excursions, and to walk with her often upon the streets, until the fact became the subject of remarks which finally reached the ears of her husband. He denounced the impropriety of her conduct, and she refused to answer his interrogatories regarding the stranger. Thus were the seeds of mutual discontent sown. The marriage relation requires tenderness and consideration constantly and freely given to each other to retain the freshness, and devotion, and idealism of young lovers. Nothing dies so soon as love without constant, daily nourishment. It is a priceless pearl, married love, and must be guarded like a pearl. Love-words must never be allowed to die out. Trifling kindnesses must be of hourly occurrence, else the marriage garden with its sweetest of flowers becomes a howling wilderness, and the gentle tie of wedlock grows rapidly into a hideous chain. And thus MacGregor and his pretty wife quarrelled and grew discontented with each other, and finally, under the ever-ready interference of her relatives and their advice, she fled away in the storm, betraying her husband with a hypocrite's kiss, and subjecting her beautiful child to the cruel stigma which the world attaches, right or wrong, to the woman who does not live with her husband.

MacGregor had always been a marvel of industry and ambition, and yet he was a tender-hearted man, and his whole purpose in his excessive labors had been to build up a sweet, comfortable home for his family. He possessed that rare gift in a man, *a woman's heart*. With all his indomitable will and ambition, he craved love and tenderness from woman. Gentle, loving words were his very life. He craved them as a woman craves them. A caress, a smile, a trivial token of remembrance were as dear to him as to any loving wife that ever breathed. Had his wife come to him every evening with a flower for his buttonhole, with a song learned which he had expressed a partiality for, with twining arms and loving looks, he would have loved her devotedly, and given his life for her. But she drove him away from her by her inordinate ambition, by her sarcasms,

and by her unwillingness to be pleased at anything he might say or do, and thus his sensitive nature retired into itself, and he became reticent, that very dagger of married life. He no longer disclosed his plans to her, for they were all literary ; and at literature, as a means of increasing his income, she sneered. Thus, the woman who might have become his idol, became his terror. When he was nervous and in pain from overwork with his brain, he found a still, dark corner of his house more congenial for his head than the soothing hand of his wife. And thus she lost one of the tenderest, most passionate, most gentle lovers that ever craved the arms of a loving wife.

But when the necessary result from all this estrangement came, it came so suddenly, so violently, that for a time the reason of MacGregor trembled upon its throne. For much as she had annoyed him, he retained towards her all the honorable feelings of a husband. She was the mother of his child ; and he never dreamed she could be so cruel as to rob him of a home, and leave him utterly alone. But when he learned the sad truth that when women are cruel, they are as cruel as demons, something of the great fighting, retaliating blood of his Scotch ancestors stirred within him. When he realized that she had remorselessly made his home a wreck, and his heart a desolate waste, he flushed with the desperation of revenge, and had she been within reach of his arm, he would have slaughtered her, and on the next instant shot himself. But while the will and the purpose for blood were rampant, his supernatural gift awoke within him ; and in the gloom of the storm the trio of his vision came to him, and he paused in his madness, at the new hope which seemed to promise him all of that tenderness for which he had so many years yearned. Then, for the first time in his acute agony, he turned to God ; and that one act of thankfulness brought him the Divine assistance, and his hand was stayed from the blood which would have crimsoned his soul in guilt.

But the tenderness which had grown up in his heart for his child could not be smothered by any sweet vision of hope, and

for weeks and months he seemed to hear with a thrill of anguish the gentle voice of his little daughter calling to him in the darkness, and he fancied he heard the patter of her little feet upon the stairs, where she had been wont to greet him and fling her arms about his neck.

After many weeks had elapsed, and he had wandered like a maniac over the great city seeking the hiding place of his wife and child, word was sent to him by an attorney that his wife was in a distant city, and had commenced a suit against him for a limited divorce, on the ground that he had not properly provided her with support. In the midst of his renewed exasperation something whispered to him to let her go without opposing her suit. He knew that she had always been a kind and devoted mother to his child. He doubted not that the maternal instinct would make her a good mother still. Perhaps for the little daughter he loved so well the care of her mother would be the happiest and best fate he could desire. And so, after long and agonized meditations, he determined to put in no defence to his wife's suit for divorce *a mensa et thoro*. She had destroyed all the illusions of his married life. He knew they never could come to him again. And so he put in no plea in defence, and she obtained her decree of separation by his default to appear in court. The tie was severed, and MacGregor was alone for life. But the dreams which had illumined his youth could not perish thus. In boyhood he had loved, almost to idolization, his mother. She had been a strong woman and a tender woman. She had been a model wife and mother. Upon her exquisite character he had founded his ideal of womanhood. He had looked eagerly forward as manhood grew upon him to the time when he too should possess a model wife like his mother, his grand, beautiful, tender, poetic, Christian mother. He craved such undying love and devotion as his mother had given to his father. His marriage came in time, and he had found it a delusion and a snare. His wife had deserted him when he was struggling and toiling to make her happy. He knew that she was a false woman and would never

have stood by the cross of Christ. She was like the great mass of her sex, wanting in the hour of suffering and when the glitter of fashion and of gold was absent from the home. But still for the sake of his dead mother he would not give up his ideal of true womanhood. And so it was sad to see him at last, after months of solitude and suffering, enter the circles of refinement and look into the face of every woman he met with, that yearning, begging, famished expression, which told too plainly that the great, gifted journalist and orator was dying of heart-hunger. Alas! he found no responsive heart in the circles where he moved, and at last, weary and faint with the search for woman's love, he turned to the engrossments of his profession and sought literary immortality.

CHAPTER II.

*"Bend in homage, stately roses, for a queen doth pass to-day.
Breathe not, lest you taint the pure robes of the queen who goes this way:
She is whiter than the lilies; she's the sweetest of the sweet;
She is all that's fine and perfect—oh, my one with grace replete."*

Allie Torbett.



HE Delancy Manor, or "Delancy Manor," to use the title given it by the surrounding land-owners, was the pride of the county. Its forests were old, its superb terraces of fruit-trees were old, and its stone manor-house was old. The family who occupied it were of an old and venerated stock. The moderns of the family were equally dignified with the ancients of the family. So said the farmers of the county, and their decision was final; for if any class of men are quick to detect and remark upon the decadence of character in an old family of the county, that class is the hard-fisted, plain-spoken tillers of the acres which they own. All the older farmers who had good memories pronounced the Delancy family to be "a first-rate old stock." They agreed that

no rogue or mean-spirited man had ever come from that stock. "The family are just a *leettle* proud for Americans," remarked Abraham Van Vechten, a well-to-do farmer of Dutch descent, to a new-comer in the neighborhood, "but then you know human nature is the same the world over, and I'm not sure but I like my own family better from their having been owners of this farm of mine some two hundred years now."

But right or wrong, wise or unwise, the Delancy family were proud of their name and estate. Their ancestors had intermarried with some of the best Dutch families of New York. Some of these ancestors had been soldiers for the English King in the Revolution. Some had shed their blood for the Republican cause. But whatever might have been their political record, they were all remembered as sterling men, fearless in battle, honest and reliable in barter.

"Delancy Manor" was not far from the Hudson river. From one bold mountain peak upon the estate a superb view was had of that majestic stream as it rolled away to the sea. From time out of mind there had been near the summit of this mountain a natural cave, at whose mouth some ancient pioneer had erected a good stone seat with a comfortable back, where the weary toiler up the mountain path might sit and overlook a long stretch of the river. The mountain was covered with forest trees nearly to its summit, but on the river side the rocks disclosed themselves occasionally through the sloping mantle of verdure. There was a mingling of stunted white pines, oaks, and maples upon the mountain sides, and the two last had already commenced to don their October hues of purple and scarlet.

In the early morning one of the Delancy family was seated at the mouth of the cave, engaged in earnest study of the autumnal landscape spread out below. Far away on the West was a range of hills whose slope reached entirely down to the bank of the Hudson. The river was already glistening in the effulgence of the morning sun. Between the river and the mountain, where the early riser was seated, was a rolling coun-

try partly under cultivation, and partly covered with woods. In some of the cultivated fields, stacks of Indian corn were standing ready to be transported to winter barns. At other points towards the river, were meadow-lands, still rich in their sweep of green grass, and cut, at intervals, with streams which, from this altitude, looked to the spectator like slender bands of silver. On the river, sails were speeding their way towards the ocean, and in the far distance a steam ferry-boat was crossing the stream, with a long line of smoke floating away westward from its chimney. The mountain with the cave near its top was one of a range of lofty hills extending from North to South, a few miles eastward from the river. The Delancy who was overlooking the magnificent panorama of hills, waters, and plains, could discover no part of Delancy Manor from this lookout, save only the western slope of the cave mountain. The greater part of the manor lay away to the eastward.

After a long and appreciative study of the landscape the spectator arose, and called repeatedly "Tasso! Tasso!" The call was answered from the woods on the western slope of the mountain by the howl of a fox-hound. Presently the bushes parted, and a graceful white hound, spotted with brown, bounded up the slope, and soon reached the presence of his owner. The future mistress of the manor patted him for a moment upon the neck, and then turned to descend the curving path which led away to the eastern side of the mountain and the Delancy estate. Before the lady had gone a dozen steps she was startled by the figure of a man emerging from the belt of foliage just below her. The hound was off to challenge the intruder in an instant, and before his mistress could restrain him by her calls, he was down at the edge of the woods and springing at the throat of the stranger. The man, with cool deliberation, levelled a blow at the dog with the butt of his fowling-piece, and Tasso went howling away in pain and terror under the trees. Deprived of the services of her only defender, the lady nevertheless fearlessly continued her descent of the mountain, and in a few seconds stood confronting the man, who had

dropped the butt of his gun to the rocks again, and stood awaiting her advent. The stranger who had at once recognized her, commenced to apologize for the part of self-defence he had been forced to play, but the lady silenced all this by the remark :

"Never mind the apology, Mr. Sampson. You are forgiven already, for I saw your danger. But what are you doing on the estate with a gun? We allow no shooting upon the manor, as you know."

"I am aware of that fact, Miss Delancy, and had no intention of hunting upon the estate. But your father gave me permission to cross the manor for the purpose of shooting ducks upon the pond at the foot of this mountain."

"Very well, then," she replied, "I shall bid you good-morning, and hurry back to the manor-house. Here, Tasso, come." The dog crawled out of the bushes and limped away towards her, but cautiously, watching the man and the gun which had so effectually annulled his valorous services.

"Stay for an instant, Miss Delancy," pleaded Mr. Sampson, placing himself partly in her way, and letting his gun fall across a log. "I have something very important to say to you. I came here with no expectation of meeting you, God knows. But since I have met you, permit me to seize this opportunity and speak to you of a matter which concerns yourself, and, indeed, all the Delancy family."

"Something startling, sensational, romantic, Mr. Sampson?" inquired the lady with a smile.

"No, Miss Delancy," he replied, "but something very serious. There has arisen a cloud in the Delancy sky, and you alone can avert it."

"Why it *is* sensational after all, Mr. Sampson. I will listen to you, certainly. Here, be seated."

She motioned him to a seat beside her, on the log where his gun had fallen. It did not require the clear-headed lawyer many minutes to unfold to the intelligent girl beside him the calamity which impended over the proud Delancy family.

"I was once your father's trusted legal adviser, Miss Delancy."

"You were, Mr. Sampson, and I think, if a girl's judgment is worth anything, that you should be so still."

"Thank you, thank you sincerely, Miss Delancy," ejaculated the lawyer. "I had a vague impression that you always relied upon my truthfulness and tact in the conduct of your father's affairs. Indeed, I have heard that you have so expressed yourself to others."

"Yes, I have advocated your claims to trust, Mr. Sampson ; but go on ; that is neither here nor there. What have you to say to me now ?"

The lawyer looked into her lovely, eager face as he pronounced these words :

"James Hartwell has employed me as his legal adviser. I have endeavored to be as faithful to his legal claims as I was to those of your father."

"Well, go on, Mr. Sampson. I am sorry that you cannot always have gentlemen for your clients. But go on."

"Hartwell claims the ownership of the Delancy Manor."

"That is simply impudence," exclaimed Miss Delancy, haughtily ; "I hope you have not detained me here to listen to the ravings of a lunatic."

"Hartwell is no lunatic, Miss Delancy. I want you to listen to the end. It is a friendly act I am doing. Therefore listen, for you are a lady of unusual sense."

"Go on, sir ; I am listening," she replied, beating the rock impatiently with her foot.

"I have seen a lease signed by your grandfather, Miss Delancy, conveying to James Hartwell the entire ownership of this manor for life."

"Impossible !" she exclaimed, turning and looking the lawyer full in the face.

"It is the truth, Miss Delancy."

"Why, Mr. Sampson, my grandfather by his will gave this manor to my father."

"But, Miss Delancy, your grandfather could not devise by will that which he did not own. The instrument by which he conveyed to Hartwell was a prior disposition of the estate, and no subsequent will could defeat it."

The lady was now alarmed indeed, and could not conceal it.

"But, Mr. Sampson, we have been suffered to go into possession of the manor, and no such claim has been advanced before. Why, my father has been in possession of Delancy manor five years. Why has not this pretender put in his claim for the property long before this."

"He could not, Miss Delancy; he was in a foreign country, and did not know of your grandfather's death. His statement is, that he allowed your grandfather to remain on the estate as a tenant at will."

The eyes of the girl flashed in anger, as she exclaimed:

"And dare you, sir, tell a Delancy to her face, that her noble old grandfather, with his great genius, and his honest and honorable pride, would voluntarily disinherit his only son, and worse than all, would seek to defraud Mr. James Hartwell by willing away to another what he had sold to him. Do you realize, sir, that you are speaking to a Delancy and the future mistress of this manor?"

She arose to her feet and confronted the lawyer. He calmly responded:

"Pecuniary embarrassments, of which you know nothing, may have driven your grandfather to the first conveyance, and mental distress, induced by the loss of the patrimony of his fathers, may have so unsettled his mind that he may have made his will not knowing what he was about. Stranger things than this have happened, Miss Delancy, and the conveyancer has remained an honorable man still. A lunatic cannot be dishonorable in any court, human or divine."

The lady stood for a moment with her fingers pressed tightly upon her closed eyelids. She was recalling a painful rumor which had been whispered to her years before, that her grandfather, during the last years of his life, had manifested at

times aberration of mind. This recollection of the report now flashed upon her with painful pertinency to the subject of their discourse. Withdrawing her hand from her eyes, she looked upon her companion again, and seating herself upon the log, she bade him continue his discourse and reveal the whole object of his detaining her.

"I am here, Miss Delancy," he said, "as Mr. Hartwell's adviser and your sincere friend, and the friend of your family. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind as to the validity of this man's claim. It will assuredly stand the test of the courts. I would seek your honored father and discuss this matter with him, did I not know how irritable he is, and had he not withdrawn his confidence from me. Your splendid manor, with all its comforts, luxuries, and tender associations, is about to pass from your family. If you still cherish towards me the friendship which once you had, you will believe me when I say to you that I look upon this change of ownership with intense regret. I have loved your family, loved your high and honorable traits of character, and been honored by the many law-suits you have confided to my care. I have been paid by several of the Delancy family handsome legal fees, and been treated like a gentleman by every one of them. Now misfortune has come to you, and I beg of you to avert it. You, and you alone, can do it. Your father can go to his grave under the delusion that he is still the proprietor of the manor. You can be within the week the sole mistress and owner of this manor. The perfect title can be vested in you, and upon the whole transaction the veil of silence will fall until you choose to speak. Will you take the manor as a gift and for it pay the penalty?"

The voice of the attorney grew tremulous as he neared the end, for he knew that he was addressing the proudest and most independent spirit in the whole county. She was but seventeen years of age, and yet her traits of character were known to every one within a circuit of fifty miles.

"And what is the penalty?"

"Marriage," said Mr. Sampson.

"With whom?" inquired the gentle voice again.

"James Hartwell."

Seeing that she remained silent and absorbed in reflections which he could not fathom, the attorney continued :

"Mr. Hartwell said to me that you are the finest woman he ever met or ever heard of; that to win your regard he would sacrifice anything; that if you will consent to marry him he will by deed, before the marriage, transfer to you his title to the Delancy manor. By that arrangement, Miss Delancy, you will have everything. See! your father will go to his grave in a few years utterly ignorant that he is divested of all his dignity. By his will you have been made his successor. The old gentleman will pass away without a pang, and you will succeed him as if his heir; your real title will be derived from Mr. Hartwell's deed. You will find Mr. Hartwell a true man, an ambitious man, and though not born in as exalted a circle of society as your own, still a man who can maintain himself and secure respect everywhere. Miss Delancy, I entreat you as a friend, do not allow this great manor to pass from you."

The attorney paused, and looked earnestly upon his companion. Her eyes were fixed upon the rock where her feet rested. She betrayed no emotion, but seemed only to be weighing the meaning of his words and the consequences of her decision. It must have been wonderful mastery over herself that prevented one so young from manifesting excitement at the prospect of losing or gaining so vast an estate. And yet, marvel of womanhood! she was not thinking of the value of property, but of two great principles. And as they presented themselves before her with all the freshness and the power that principles possess for a young and pure heart, there seemed to her that some counsellor was necessary to her; that her own independent character was inadequate to solve the problems, and that she needed both God and man to strengthen her. And so, at last, she said kindly, raising her dark-brown eyes to the lawyer :

"I thank you for your kindness in wishing me well. I go from you now to seek legal advice. If I send a lawyer to you, you will find no difficulty, I suppose, in making the hopelessness of my father's cause as plain to him as you do to me."

"Send your lawyer to me, Miss Delancy," he replied; "I will satisfy him of the utter hopelessness of litigating this matter with Mr. Hartwell."

"I have one favor to ask before I go, Mr. Sampson. It is that you will not permit any whisper of this claim to reach my father's ears until I have given you my final decision in regard to Mr. Hartwell."

"No one shall speak of this matter to your father or to any one except to the lawyer you send me."

"I thank you, Mr. Sampson; good-morning."

And thus they parted.

As Miss Delancy continued her walk down the curving mountain-path the crippled dog followed her. She soon entered the shadows of the woods which belted the base of the mountain, and heard the dash of a small waterfall in a creek which was making its way downward to swell the waters of one of the manor streams. She noted the rich autumnal colors of the oaks and maples, and saw the lights and shadows dancing upon a trout pool where the waters had gathered preparatory to their descent upon the meadows of the manor. Gray squirrels were uttering their deep, guttural sounds in the tops of the chestnut trees, and occasionally a red squirrel, disturbed by the sound of her approaching footsteps, would dart across the ground before her, and dash chattering up the trunk of a pine. All nature seemed alive and exulting in the warmth of the glorious October morning. Red-headed woodpeckers were hammering away upon the hollow trunks of the dead trees, and occasionally a partridge startled from his covert would burst away through the bushes, and with a hollow *thrum* disappear under the shadows. Once a great hawk spread his dusky wings and flew slowly away before her through the tree-tops; and a shudder passed over her. It was an omen of evil.

Would the mission upon which she was going that day have a disastrous termination? She was going to consult with an interpreter and expounder of human laws. She was also about to seek the presence of one who claimed the right to disclose to men the wishes and the commands of the eternal God. She was about to seek a solution for one of the most solemn problems that are ever proposed to a woman's heart; aye, more, that are ever proposed to a woman's soul. In the flush, and the beauty, and the enthusiasm of her young womanhood, she was determined to do right in all things. She believed, and had been taught, that God blessed those who seek counsel from Him. She intended now to inquire, nay, to demand from one of His appointed ministers what was the whole counsel of God. Thus fortified, could she not dare all fate? Could she not safely launch her vessel upon the waves of the future and the unknown, and trust the result to her Creator, whose will she sought to perform. She resolutely started in life with the firm resolve to do nothing adverse to the will of God. Was He not, then, by His promises, bound to see her safely through? Would He?

Thus meditating, she passed through the woods until she reached a clearing. Here, from a rocky knoll, moss-covered, burst upon her view the splendid expanse of "Delancy Manor."

CHAPTER III.

*"How many secrets the tall, deceitful grasses hide,
Patting the turf that covers a maiden's innocent rest,
And creeping and winding old haunted ruins among,
As silently smooths the mould above the murdered breast,
Smothering down to deeper silence a buried wrong!"*

Marietta Holley.



IRDLED by the blue mountains, and intersected by streams and valleys, stretched away the broad acres of the great estate. It was like the fanciful and haze-like creations of a dream—this venerable, wide-reaching

Delancy Manor, sleeping voluptuously in the mellow sunlight of the October day. It was not dazzlingly, but serenely beautiful. The hazy light of the autumn had spread its witchery over hill and plain. The distant mountains were of a soft, velvety lightblue, and the white-cloud messengers had dropped from above to whisper to their summits. Lovingly the downy softness of these celestial lovers folded about the blue peaks, and seemed to slumber there in exquisite peace, having whispered their love. Far away on every side were fields rich in stacks of golden corn; and wagons loaded with the golden ears were slowly wending their way to granaries and barns. In other fields huge masses of hay were gathered in symmetrical cones, and thatched above to protect them from the coming winter storms. Countless apple-trees were on every side bending beneath their burden of red and yellow fruit; and there were parties of boys and girls gathering the apples into baskets as their companions shook them from the branches. There were fields from which the wheat had been garnered, and whose stubble gave forth in the autumn haze a pale-yellow light; and there were contrasting meadows of rich green near the streams, which bore all the freshness of verdure of the springtime; and there were distant glimpses of cascades, which in the sunlight seemed to shiver in silver tremor. Long rows of naked elms drooped their branches over streams which laved their roots and yet in the distance seemed to lie motionless and clear as glass. And there were fleet streams crossing the manor which disdained to sleep, and danced and gurgled their way over pebbles, or leaped merrily down declivities. Here and there ancient woods in mantles of scarlet and yellow retained their venerable rule; and up one rocky mountain side climbed a mass of vines whose leaves were scarlet in the touch of the night frosts.

In the great meadow a dozen thorough-bred steeds were luxuriating in freedom, and cows and sheep were roving over every hill-side. There was a lake in the foreground bordered by weeping willows, and a sail-boat lay as if asleep upon its calm

surface. At the right of this extended panorama was a long double row of elm-trees, commencing at a rustic bridge over a large stream, and extending up the slope of a hill nearly half a mile.

Miss Delancy, after gazing for a few moments over the beauties of the manor from the moss-covered height, descended the rock to the lowlands beneath it. Here she found her horse attached to a fence. Disengaging him she mounted, and dashed off across the fields, following a bridle-path well defined across the estate. She was greeted on every side by the laborers and courteously bowed in return. Upon reaching the rustic bridge, she checked her steed, and allowed him to drink from the stream. Then returning to the road, she crossed the bridge, and bounded up the long avenue of trees towards the manor-house. When she had followed the avenue of elms nearly up to the mansion, they widened away from her, and circling away to the right and left, terminated in the natural forest in rear of the house. Dashing ahead, she soon reined in her steed before the great entrance-hall of her ancestors. As she dismounted, and gave her horse to the groom who was waiting for her before the mansion, he remarked upon her pallor, and evident loss of her accustomed vivacity.

"It is only the effect of some disagreeable news I heard this morning. Do I really look pale, Henry? I would not for the world that father should notice anything unusual in my appearance."

"Then keep out of the old gentleman's way until you are better, Miss Marie. You are very pale, certainly. If you go through the hall to your room, he will not see you, for he has gone out on the terrace."

Glad to know that she would not encounter her father upon entering the hall, she hurriedly gathered up her riding-dress in one hand, and ascended the stone steps of the mansion. When she reached her apartments, she threw aside her riding-hat, unloosened her dress, and, seating herself in her arm-chair, bowed her head and wept long and bitterly. She was upon the eve of

a great sacrifice—one of those sublime self-immolations which good women have known in every age and country. And the weaker and more broken-down she appeared at the commencement of the sacrifice, the stronger and calmer would she be in the end, when the nerve and the smiles were required.

By the time the bell had summoned her to the breakfast-table, all traces of tears had been washed away, and she appeared before the family dressed in a brown merino with narrow white collar and cuffs, and with a warm flush of health in her cheeks. As she assumed her customary position at the coffee-urn, her father came in from the terrace, and giving her the morning kiss, placed beside her plate the fresh flower which he knew she loved so well. Then, taking his seat at the foot of the table, he reverently said grace. Scarcely had the servants served the father and daughter with the various dishes of the meal, when the dilatory members of the family came dropping in, one by one, until the dozen chairs around the table were occupied. Marie's mother had long been sleeping in the churchyard, and her grandmother, the widow of the late lord of the manor, never made her appearance at the breakfast-table, but had her meals served to her in her private rooms. Thus Miss Delancy was really the mistress of the manor-house. The rest of the family who surrounded the table were young ladies and gentlemen, cousins of Marie, and only visitors upon the estate. They were all very merry, under the influence of the bright October sun, and discussed their plans for enjoyment during the morning. No one seemed younger and more enthusiastic than Arthur Delancy, the father of Marie, and lord of the manor. Short in stature, but powerful in frame, with keen gray eyes, gray side whiskers, short gray hair cropped close to his head, and a square, hard-skinned face, he looked the very impersonation of inflexible will and manliness. His eyes roved quickly everywhere. Nothing escaped him; and his pleasantries came quick and nervously from his lips, while his eyes twinkled at times with intense mischief and fun. He was the life of the whole circle, and fired his wit and humor

indiscriminately about him. There were one or two young ladies at the table, of remote kin to Marie, who seemed to think the handsome gentleman of fifty-five, with his vivacity and magnetic humor, far more desirable a companion than the younger gentlemen who were assiduous in their attentions and efforts to please.

In the course of the conversation, however, a subject was introduced which attracted the instant attention of all the party.

"Col. Delancy," said a young gentleman, across the table, "I encountered upon your estate, in my ride yesterday, an object of fearful interest. Perhaps you can give me more explicit information about it than one of your tenants did."

"What is that, Markham?" inquired the proprietor of the manor. All eyes were now turned to the first speaker.

"About twenty rods from the porter's lodge, just after you enter the gate, and on the right hand, in a grove of elm-trees, is a solitary grave. I don't know what induced me to ride there, for it is off the main avenue, and looks as if no one ever went near it. But ride there I did. The headstone has this inscription: 'An unknown man lies here who was found murdered on this spot October 15th, 1858. He was a middle-aged man, dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, and beardless: about five feet ten inches in height, and heavy, powerful frame.' I was struck with a certain awe at this grave without a name, and this melancholy record of crime. I rode across the grass to some laborers in a cornfield and inquired about it, but they had no more knowledge about the matter than the headstone itself afforded."

In the midst of a profound silence, Arthur Delancy said:

"That affair is one of the most mysterious I ever knew. My father, the late proprietor of the manor, erected that headstone a few years before his death, thinking it might some day give a clue to the man's relatives, if relatives he had. The facts are these. One dark, windy night in October, indeed, one of those unusual nights when it seems as if the wind would

rend every branch from the trees above the traveller, the Rev. Mr. Morgan, our present rector, was returning along the highway, from the death-bed of a member of his congregation. When nearly opposite that grove of elm-trees, and in the midst of a furious rush of the gale, he heard the cry of 'murder! murder!' It was a loud, agonized cry, and directly after it he thinks he heard two or three heavy *thuds* as of a club striking upon a man's head. But there were so many strange sounds made by the wind in the trees, that he does not feel justified in taking an oath to that effect. But the cry, he says, was distinct, and twice uttered. He was not two hundred feet away from the spot where the body was found, and immediately secured his horse to the manor fence, and clambering over it, groped his way among the trunks of the elm-trees until he stumbled over the body of the murdered man. While doing so, however, he heard the beat of a horse's hoofs dashing rapidly along the gravelled avenue that leads to the porter's gate, then a sound as of a horseman clearing the gate at a single leap, and alighting in the highway beyond. Then the horse's hoofs sounded distinctly on the highway passing directly by the elm grove, and very near to the point where his own horse was standing tied to the manor fence. He listened to the sound of the flying hoofs until they died away in the gale and the distance. The night was very dark, but the clergyman groped his way across the fields, and finally reached the manor-house and aroused my father and myself. We had both been in bed two or three hours. My father aroused the servants, and obtaining lanterns we all crossed the fields, and entering the elm grove flung a strong light upon the face and form of the murdered man. His skull had been broken in by some heavy club or iron bar, and the blows had evidently been many and malignant. There was not the slightest clue to his identification found upon his person, and though hundreds of people visited the body on the ensuing day no one recollected ever seeing him before. He had a small sum of money upon him, but no watch or jewelry. When daylight came we found

the track of a horse's hoofs in the green sod over which the murderer had passed in coming to the elm grove from the porter's gate, and the print of the hoofs in the same field where the horse had passed in flying away to the gate and the highway, as our rector had stated. This is all that was ever known. The coroner's jury failed to elicit any additional facts. And there the mystery remains to this day."

The profound silence which had been maintained during the delivery of Arthur Delancy's story was now broken by comments upon the affair, and one young lady proposed that the gentleman who was to accompany her upon her horseback ride that morning, should conduct her to the solitary grave, which proposition was accepted. But Miss Delancy proposed that Markham, her cousin, should drive her over to the house of Mr. Morgan, the rector, as she wished to call upon him, and also to carry to his sick wife some delicacies which she had been preparing for her. Markham was delighted at the prospect of escorting his fair cousin, and thus in the discussion of their plans for the day, the breakfast party broke up. But before Miss Delancy left the breakfast-room, she superintended the preparation upon a salver of the breakfast for her grandmother, and then accompanied the servant who carried it to the private apartments. Passing along the halls of the house, the mistress and servant came to a modern addition to the mansion, which had been erected by her grandfather just before his death. This addition, like the more ancient part of the house, was built of gray stone, with deep and capacious windows, but the ceilings of the halls were more lofty, and the passage-ways not so simple and straightforward as those of the old house. Upon ascending the heavy oaken stairway, they passed upon the second story a fine library room, whose shelves were filled with books purchased by her grandfather shortly before his decease. Adjoining this library, and connected with it by a door, was the sleeping chamber of the grandmother. The next apartment beyond the bed-chamber was the old lady's private parlor, and here the two entered, and carefully arranged

the breakfast upon the table. Then Miss Delancy dismissed the servant, and going to the door of the bed-chamber, announced to her grandmother that her morning meal was awaiting her.

"I will be with you soon, my precious Marie," responded a sweet voice from within, and Miss Delancy seated herself by the window to await her advent. The sunlight was pouring in at the great windows, and a fire was crackling away upon the hearth to drive away the chill air of the morning. These bright auxiliaries to comfort, in connection with the heavy red damask window curtains and the red carpet, gave a warm glow to the apartment, and would have cheered the heart of Miss Delancy herself had not the shadow of approaching evil to her race been upon her soul. But the communication of Mr. Sampson was ever present to her recollection, and her eyes went sadly roving over every object in the apartment, which now at any moment she felt might be taken from her. Her eyes finally became fixed upon a portrait hanging on the opposite wall. It was the likeness of her grandfather, the grand old statesman and soldier who had covered the Delancy name with glory. Unlike her father his eyes were a dark brown like her own. But his complexion was dark, and the firm lines about the mouth indicated the inflexible will which had carried him so triumphantly over battle-fields both military and political. He had been an indomitable and skillful political leader in his day, and he had clung to, and fought out to a successful termination, suits before the State Courts which seemed almost hopeless. All of his race possessed this tenacity of purpose ; but Jourdan Delancy was preëminently iron in resolution and persistency. Fruitful in resources, of a broad intellectual grasp, and thoroughly conversant with the secret springs of human actions, he was a hard man to contend with when once a conviction had taken possession of him that people intended to defraud him. He would give away money liberally, but to force a dollar from him was a Herculean task. He was not unlike Arthur Delancy in the square, rigid contour of his face, but he wore no beard of

any kind, and his features indicated a higher order of intellectuality than his son's. He looked like a natural-born commander of men. His long, silvery gray hair hung in unkempt or careless masses upon his shoulders. He must have been close upon seventy when the portrait was painted. He wore a shirt bosom with a broad ruffle, and his dark velvet coat was lined and collared with sables. He came of a renowned line of English and French ancestors, and his mien indicated that he was proud of it.

As Miss Delancy studied the venerable countenance, intellectual and patrician beyond a question, she wondered at the strange story told by Mr. Sampson. Could it *be* possible that Jourdan Delancy had deeded away the manor to a stranger? Had he voluntarily dispossessed himself of the ancestral estate to the impoverishment and degradation of his son? How had this sensible old man become pecuniarily embarrassed? He had always borne the reputation of being a discreet man, and one who had added to, rather than diminished, the ancestral acres. The first supposition of Mr. Sampson appeared to her to be less plausible than the last. Jourdan Delancy might have become mentally disordered in his old age and made an absurd will. This was no uncommon act for an aged man just about to enter his grave. But that her grandfather had, in the full possession of all his faculties, deeded away the manor because he was short of money, was so unlike him that she could not credit it. Those were the very times when he had always shown fight; when strong efforts were made to detach farms from the manor. The surmises of Mr. Sampson seemed to her to be trivial. She would consider them further. Nay, a better idea came to her. "I will ask grandmother about him. She is clear-headed, and understands men thoroughly, and remembers perfectly."

Just at this stage of her meditation her grandmother entered, saluted her grandchild upon her cheek, and noticed at once that Marie was lacking in her usual vivacity.

"What's the matter, my darling?" she said; "your step is

not so elastic, and there is a touch of sadness in your eyes. Kiss me again, my princess. There, come and lay your head in my arms, my sweetness, my all : what's the matter with you ?”

“Nothing particular, only that I have been out riding and I am tired. Don't mind me, grandmother, but eat your breakfast. See, I have provided everything myself just as you like it.”

“So you have, Marie, like a good child. But come and sit close by me. I need you, my darling, more and more as the days go by. There now, pour out my coffee and tell me where you have been and what all the people downstairs are doing. You know what I like to hear. How is Arthur this morning, and why has he not brought me my flower from the terrace ?”

“Father did have the flower for you,” she replied. “He laid it beside his plate at breakfast, and told them all it was for you. But some gentleman called him suddenly out into his office and he did not return. No doubt he will come to you when he is at liberty again. But oh ! grandmother, what do you think came up at breakfast again : that old, old story that every new-comer is sure to hear some way and inquire about. Cousin Markham has discovered the nameless grave, and father had to tell them that story over again. I wish father would have that body removed to the public cemetery. It is so disagreeable hearing it discussed so often, and if it was removed that would be the last of it.”

The grandmother of Marie responded almost fretfully, at least it appeared so to Miss Delancy : “I told your grandfather many times before his death that he ought never to have buried that man within the enclosure of the manor. But nothing I could say to him would have the slightest influence. He seemed to think that the ends of public justice demanded that the matter should all be talked about on the very spot where the crime was committed. He was very hard-headed in some things.”

CHAPTER IV.

"Do you know what it is to have bad and bitter blood conflicting in your veins with the mild and milky stream that flows through them in greater volume and tranquillity? And has it been your lot to feel, at some time of your life, that this swelling tide had power (unsuspected before) to carry everything before it? If not, take no merit to yourself for having proved immaculate and defied temptation."

The Household of Bouverie.

MARIE was silent for a long time while her grandmother was eating her breakfast. The old lady had appeared to answer her fretfully, as if the subject was a disagreeable one. But presently, of her own accord, she introduced the subject again.

"You must not infer from my last remark, child, that your grandfather and I were not a harmonious couple. He was devotedly attached to me, and there never was a day in our married life when I would not have laid down my life for him. But he had very firm convictions sometimes as to what course he should pursue. And then remonstrance was simply wasted upon him. You would imagine at times that he had given up his purpose as impracticable. He would cease to talk about it for a long time, but then suddenly some favorable opportunity would present itself to carry out his ideas, and he would grasp that occasion and carry out exactly what he had promised to do months, and even years before. His tenacity of purpose was wonderful, and he never forgot or abandoned any scheme. I tried to ridicule him out of keeping this grave upon the manor grounds, calling the manor a potter's field; but it was useless, and there it stands to-day. Arthur is just like him in this respect. He says his father had good reasons for keeping the grave there in the interest of justice, and there it shall stand just as in his father's life."

"Grandmother," said Miss Delancy, "I want to ask you a question."

"What is it, my darling?" said the old lady, pushing back her chair from the table, and then bidding Marie sit close be-

side her and hold her hand. The young lady did as she requested, and laid her cheek affectionately upon her grandmother's shoulder, her eyes being turned toward the window. The jet-black eyes of the old lady looked out in the same direction as she listened. She was an imposing specimen of the old-fashioned people of the county, tall and stately, with beautiful gray curls, contrasting strangely with her brilliant dark eyes, which seemed in no degree to have lost the fire and penetration of their youth.

"I want to talk with you about my father's father," continued Miss Delancy.

"Very well, talk on," was the reply.

"Did grandfather ever manifest, early or late in life, anything like insanity?"

"Bless your heart, child!" was the exclamation in response, "what put that idea in your head? Why no, certainly not! The peculiarity about your grandfather was, that his faculties seemed to be under more perfect control the longer he lived. He attended to all his business affairs himself until the day of his death."

"But, grandmother, when I was away at school, did he not receive a kick in the head from his horse?"

"Yes, he did. But that only laid him up two or three days in bed. He came out from that bed just as strong and well as ever. But who has been putting these notions in your head about your grandfather?"

"Lucy Sinclair told me that her father always said grandfather was not the same man after that horse kicked him."

"Nonsense! child. You must not forget what I am going to tell you. Lucy Sinclair's father had a lawsuit with your grandfather and was beaten before the courts. He never forgave my husband for that defeat, but traduced him on every occasion until his death. This story is only one of the many he trumped up against him. For I assure you, and I certainly ought to know, that your grandfather was one of the most clear-headed and reliable men I ever knew up to the very day of his death."

"What did he die of, grandmother?" inquired Marie.

"Of smallpox."

"And was that the reason you did not send for me to come to the funeral?"

"It was. The disease was so prevalent and so malignant, that the whole neighborhood was in terror. Few persons could be induced to attend any funeral, and there were not twenty persons besides the mourners at your grandfather's grave."

The perplexity of Miss Delancy, which resulted from this conversation, kept her lips closed for several minutes, during which time Mrs. Jourdan Delancy chatted on concerning the details of that funeral. What weight now ought she to attach to the statements and opinions of Mr. Sampson. No hypothesis of that lawyer could explain away now the contradiction of the deed and the will. Her grandfather had been utterly removed from all suspicions of insanity by the testimony of his own family. His own wife, perfectly clear-headed and competent, living on the most intimate terms with him, had pronounced such suspicions utterly groundless. Why then had her ancestor deeded away the manor to Hartwell, and afterwards devised it by another instrument to his son? This pure-minded, high-toned girl, never dreamed for an instant of impeaching her grandfather's honor in the matter. She was too thoroughly a Delancy to be suspicious of any member of her race. Her present conviction was that Mr. Sampson must have made some mistake, and that the sooner she consulted a legal adviser the better for herself and her father's interests. Perhaps she would not be forced to make a sacrifice for her beloved father after all. She determined to consult on that very day a young judge of the court who was her kinsman. Full of these thoughts she soon found excuse for leaving her grandmother, and passed away down the stairs, leaving the old lady alone.

Scarcely had her footsteps died away when Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, with singular energy, arose to her feet and locked

the hall door of her room. Age seemed to have made little impression upon her physical strength or nervous energy. She rapidly crossed the room, unlocked a writing-desk, and took out a letter addressed to herself, and which she had received the night before. The seal was already broken, and she had a perfect knowledge of the contents, but she wished to re-read it. So seating herself in a huge rocking-chair, an heirloom of the Delancy family, she carefully perused the letter again. It read thus :

“MRS. JOURDAN DELANCY—MY DEAR MADAME : I have a startling communication to make to you, and I trust to your well-known dignity of character to give me a patient hearing, and then to decide calmly and wisely upon the proposal I make. Your husband, before his death, was at times pecuniarily embarrassed, and received from me large advances of money. Finding at last that he could not repay me without sacrificing the manor, he entered upon this agreement with me. He executed a lease for life of the estate, giving me the entire control and use of the manor during my natural life. After my death, of course, the remainder of the estate would revert to him if living. Otherwise it would go to his heirs. If he survived me, the manor would go back to him. If he did not survive me, then upon my death the property would go to whatever person or persons represented him as his heirs. If your son survived me he would take the estate upon my death. If he did not survive me, then upon my decease the manor would go to your son's daughter, and so on. You understand the object of this arrangement was to enable me, out of the rents of the manor, to reimburse myself for the moneys which he had borrowed of me. After my death your husband expected the estate to descend to his heirs, or to your son's heirs, which would be the legal result, as any lawyer will tell you. It was moreover stipulated between your husband and myself (but this was not put into writing as the lease was), that he should retain possession of the manor until my return from Europe. I did not know of

your husband's death until my return from abroad recently. I take this early opportunity to notify you, in order that you may exert your influence with your granddaughter, Miss Delancy, to avert the mortification of seeing the ancient home of the family pass into the entire control of a stranger to their blood. Your family can effect an arrangement by which Miss Delancy will hold the manor during my life. I earnestly desire and respectfully solicit the hand of your granddaughter in marriage. Secure this for me, and I will, before the wedding, transfer to her all the interest which I have in the estate; in other words, I will give her all that the law allows me to do, the control of the manor during my life. I am afraid to approach her father with this proposal, as he is so irritable lately; and I fear the very statement of my claim will so exasperate him that he may resort to personal violence, or words which will put us forever at enmity. Do, then, I entreat of you, before this matter becomes public, and before exasperation is elicited from any quarter, approach your granddaughter, and secure from her good judgment and filial regard for her father's dignity, her assent to marry me. I will then make her the real mistress of the manor, from the hour she pledges her word of honor to become my wife. Nay, more. The whole matter may be arranged without her father ever hearing of my lease. He may quarrel with me and with her, on account of the marriage; but time will reconcile him to his son-in-law. Such things have happened often enough before. I trust you will not be offended, but will treat me with the good-will proper towards one who desires to marry into your family, and for that honor is willing to yield up a life estate in the noble old manor of Delancy.

"I am your obedient and humble servant,

"JAMES HARTWELL."

The letter was flung after this second perusal into the fire on the hearth, and was soon consumed.

"You infamous scoundrel," exclaimed the venerable lady;

"how dare you aspire to the hand of a Delancy? Sooner than that disgrace shall alight upon the proud old family, I will send you myself to your grave. Yes ! I'll do it myself," she continued fiercely, her dark eyes flaming with a terrible brilliancy. "I know too well, you villain, that you have got us all in your snare. Yes ! you have the lease for life, and all the Delancy family must go forth as pilgrims and strangers from their heritage. You have made us paupers by your cunning, and we must all toil now and beg perhaps. But I'll not tamely submit. Let the tameness and the meekness of religion be for those who have no fighting blood in their veins. Beware ! James Hartwell, beware !"

A fearful expression crossed the aged countenance. The furies were contending in the old woman's soul, and her eyes glared like a maniac's. She crossed the room to a mirror and looked at herself. "Ah ha ! I like that distorted, devilish face. That looks like work. But I must school myself to smile and play the venerable until the appointed time ; then let him laugh who laughs last."

She shivered in her rage and the intensity of her will, and some strange fascination seemed to be in the mirror where she studied her expression, so diabolical and so murderous. Then she turned quickly away to a bureau, threw open the drawer, and drew out from amongst her clothing carefully folded within it a dagger. She unsheathed it, examined the glittering blade, and then replaced it in the bureau. She was meditating murder. While she stood thus possessed of every evil passion that a terrible disappointment brings, a solemn interruption broke in upon her thoughts. Hark ! a bell was tolling. Its heavy, mournful clang came at intervals over the meadows of the manor. So tremulous and yet so solemn the deep vibrations, that she stood appalled listening to them. Some one had gone to render up an account of the deeds done in the body. For some poor soul life was over and eternity had begun. The strong hold of some mortal on life had relaxed, and the soul had gone before its Maker. Of what use was the strong will,

and the indomitable energy, and the vaulting ambition now? The brilliant eye and the elegant form were going to be laid beneath the sod, and the bell, the bell, the solemn, slow-moving bell, was counting the footfalls of the bearers. Oh! is there an all-seeing, all-searching God who demands an exact account of the good and the evil deeds done in the body? Is there a home for the just, the gentle, the forgiving, the merciful; and a fearful punishment for theft, and cruelty, and murder? Shall we all stand face to face with God?

The old woman crept to the window, and, kneeling down upon the floor, peered forth at the solemn-moving funeral train, and listened to the mournful clang of the bell. And it seemed as if a voice from the far-off and the eternal was whispering to her "*Thou shalt not kill.*" And why should she not kill? She had battled long and painfully with life. In her youthful days, when most girls of her rank revel in song and music and gentle companionship, her father had become impoverished, and she was forced to toil, and toil hard for her daily bread. When she married at length, her husband had turned out a drunkard and a brute, and had cast her again a toiler upon the waste of life. After years of poverty and struggle a light had shone in upon her life. Her talents as a teacher had won the admiration of the proprietor of the great Delancy Manor. He made her his wife, and in the devotion he gave her, and in the company of the son she bore him, her life began to lose its apprehension and its bitterness. Then came a change in her proud position. She ceased to be the mistress of the manor and her son reigned in her place. But the proud Arthur Delancy was a good son to her on all occasions, and she cherished the hope so gratifying to old age, that she was possessed of a safe, comfortable home for life. And now had come another fearful revulsion. She was about to be driven forth from the manor, a beggar, in her old age, and her son and granddaughter would be beggared also. Where could they go, to whom should they turn for help? "*Thou shalt not kill.*" Why not? Kingdoms and states wage bloody wars to save a fragment of land from being wrenched away from

them. And she, a poor, enfeebled woman, was only about to rescue from the spoiler and the stranger, by a single blow, the home of herself and her child. She *knew* that Hartwell had no just claim to the manor. She *knew* that his trumped-up pretences of moneys advanced by him to her husband were all false. Her husband had owed him no money. And she *knew* it. And here this man was coming to take the manor under the lease, Aye! under the lease. He had the lease and her husband had signed it. But Hartwell had no right before God to that manor, and she knew it, absolutely and satisfactorily knew it. And yet she could not stay the operation of that lease, and it must become operative at once. Nothing but the blow of a dagger could avert that calamity to the Delancy family. She knew that if she went before the court, and impeached the validity of that lease, it would be utterly useless to James Hartwell. Then the lease would become invalid. But she would not go before the court. Some powerful reason restrained her. So there was no alternative but to allow the lease to stand. Then, speedily, Hartwell would enter and dispossess her son of the manor. Her granddaughter could blunt the edge of that calamity by marrying Hartwell, could establish herself as the owner of the estate during Hartwell's life. But this was repugnant to the pride of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy. In fact, it would estrange all the Delancy race for Marie to contract marriage with this upstart. She knew, moreover, that Hartwell was an unprincipled rascal, and she shuddered at the idea of her pure-minded grandchild mating with him. Then he was as old as Marie's own father. Every consideration prompted her to save her granddaughter from this hateful union. Every consideration induced her to incline towards the dagger as the best method of ridding the estate of Hartwell. She could not become a beggar. Her pride was too great. She knew from personal experience how hard it was to toil in poverty. She could not, with her towering ambition, towering even in her old age, relinquish wealth and comfort. And thus the temptation to do violence upon the person of Hartwell was almost overpowering. But in the great

hour of Satan's appeal to her ambition, a church bell sounded, only a church bell, solemnly vibrating in tones of touching power to all who would listen to the appeal of God. It was not a sermon written by skillful human hands. It was only the solemn honor paid to the passing dead. It was only a bell, and yet how solemn, how sadly eloquent! We all must die, and what then? Sweet bell! though pealing above the dead. Sweet bell! though vibrating on the ears of the weeping relatives. Sweet bell! thou hast melted a soul and made it submissive to the will of God. The poor woman, so gifted, so resolute, so proud, so ambitious, was melted to tears by the bell, and, falling on her face, she prayed to the God of her mother, that mother who had walked purely and humbly before God all the days of her life. Now just on the verge of eternity, ripe with years and experience, this strange, proud, iron-hearted woman thought of her mother who had slumbered so long under the sods of the valley. "Perish all wealth, all pomp, and all power, oh! my God; so that I live with my dead mother among the just, I will relinquish all."

She lifted her tearful eyes and gazed out upon the broad manor. How lovely it was sleeping in the October haze. How many sweet years had she lived upon the old estate. How fondly had she cherished the hope of dying upon it. Here had she been loved and tenderly provided for. Here had her babe first seen the light, and here had it grown up into merry, prattling childhood. She had watched the boy ripen into manhood, and a halo of pride had seemed to circle her head as she discerned in him the good, solid, useful traits of his ancestors. Here had she hoped he would close her eyes in death, and follow her to the ancient vaults of the Delancy family. But the bell, the sweet, solemn bell of God's house had melted her pride away, and she was willing now to sacrifice and suffer, submissive to the divine will, that she might go down to death with the firm hope of a glorious resurrection. Yes! in some hearts the passion and the resentment which lead to murder lie close beside the tenderness which is of God. And it requires some-

times only the music of a loving voice, or the exquisite and mournful magic of a bell to awaken all that is pure and holy. Remember this, you who minister to the passionate, and the proud, and the revengeful. The silver chord of the beautiful lies close beside the chord of iron. Deal gently till you find the better harmony of the wonderful human heart, and God will reward you.

And as the aged wife of Jourdan Delancy looked forth tearfully upon the beautiful estate upon which she must so soon turn her back forever, she saw a fair girl driven away from the manor-house by her relative, Markham. The young man was driving the buggy, and Marie was seated beside him. Where was the granddaughter going, wondered the old wife of Jourdan Delancy. She was going upon a mission which only a pure-minded, heroic, poetic nature would undertake. She was going to obtain, if possible, ransom for her beloved father. She was going to save him in his declining years, if God should so instruct her, from poverty and humiliation; and she was intending to do it at the sacrifice of herself, and all that was dearest to her in womanhood. Miss Delancy possessed all the energy and will of her ancestors, but the full power of each inherited quality was still dormant. The sweetness, and innocence, and trust of girlhood were upon her, and she was not herself yet conscious of what she could accomplish in emergencies. It needed trial, and long suffering, and privations to teach her the full measure of her powers. She only realized now that her father was likely to be impoverished, and that she might, by marrying, save him. But she would not relinquish all her poetical ideas concerning love and marriage, until she had assured herself beyond all question that the manor was really in danger. So she directed her companion to drive her first to Judge Livingston, her kinsman, a few miles eastward from the manor-house. The ride was delightful for her cousin Markham, who knew nothing of her plans, and was only too happy to be the chosen escort of the future heiress of the manor.

She entertained him as only a woman can who is self-engrossed, but does not intend others to know it.

After an hour's ride they reached the residence of Judge Livingston, and Miss Delancy begged her cousin to amuse himself, as best he could, until she had transacted her business with her relative. He assisted her to alight, and then drove off to a party of gentlemen who appeared to be duck-shooting upon the outlet of a lake. After an hour's absence he drove back to Judge Livingston's, just in time to see that gentleman mount his horse and ride away northward. His cousin's energy and representations had already sent off the Judge to a consultation with Mr. Sampson regarding the mysterious claim of Hartwell to the Delancy manor.

"Now drive me over to the rector's," said Marie, as she resumed her seat beside Markham in the buggy.

"Is not this clergyman to whom we are going," he inquired, "the same your father mentioned as having heard the cry of murder, and who found the murdered man under the elm grove?"

"Yes, the very same," she replied, "and if you feel like inquiring further, he will tell you all he knows about it."

"Then I shall certainly ask him, for I think it very mysterious, and it has scarcely been out of my mind since breakfast."

When another hour had passed in an agreeable conversation between the cousins, who were in many respects congenial in tastes and ideas, they found themselves before the gate which opened into the grounds of the Rev. Mr. Morgan. Two little girls were playing upon the lawn, which was covered with the autumnal leaves blown from the chestnuts and maples on every side. The children were tossing the dry leaves into the air and shouting in glee.

When Miss Delancy had been assisted to alight by her companion, and had taken upon her arm the basket of delicacies which she brought for the clergyman's wife, she walked slowly up the gravelled walk towards the house, while Markham secured his horse to one of the maples standing outside the gate.

Every tree and shrub wore the rich coloring of the autumn ; and some of the apple-trees in the garden were laden with bright red apples of some rare species. The little girls ran forward upon recognizing their visitor and escorted her to the front door of the house, which they opened for her. Passing in through the hall she encountered the rector, and was conducted by him to the sick chamber of his wife. Miss Delancy then sent him out to receive her cousin Markham and entertain him until she could find time to have a private conversation with him regarding some especial object of her visit. The clergyman met the young man in the grounds, and conducted him to the rustic seat under the apple-trees, where a servant soon brought them wine and a plate of red apples. While thus regaling themselves, Markham found an opportunity to open the subject of the murder and the Rev. Mr. Morgan's connection therewith. In the course of the conversation which ensued Markham obtained some information which had not been detailed to him by the proprietor of the manor at the breakfast table, and of which he was doubtless wholly ignorant. He pondered upon this additional fact divulged by the clergyman and determined to make his cousin acquainted with it upon their drive homeward. While they were still earnestly talking one of the little girls summoned Mr. Morgan to meet Marie in his study.

CHAPTER V.

*"Bend though thou must beneath his will,
Let not one abject moan have place ;
But with majestic, silent grace,
Maintain thy regal bearing still."*

Virginia Capta.



HE Rev. Henry Morgan was a tall and splendidly developed man, with gray hair, and side whiskers of the same hue. His eye was piercingly black, and his mien commanding. He was a powerful elocutionist and

an honor in every respect to his sacred calling. He was utterly oblivious to what is called the "public opinion" of his congregation, and knew no standard of action but his own convictions of right and propriety. He often defended those who were censured by the world, and fought for his friends with wonderful zeal and warmth. But the stamp of integrity was unmistakably upon him, and all of his spiritual flock respected him. Some of them loved him ardently, and among this number was the elegant young patrician, who had summoned him to his sanctum for a conference. She sat there awaiting him, and, when he came in, she extended her gloved hand to him as he took his seat upon the sofa beside her. He grasped it warmly, and then relinquished it, saying :

"Well, my sweet friend, what is the question now, temporal or eternal? the world, the flesh, or the devil?"

"It may be one or all of these combined," replied Miss Delancy, laughing. "It's matrimony, Mr. Morgan. I want your advice as my pastor."

"Why, my sweet Marie, do you contemplate leaving us? What will Saint John's do without you, you the bulwark of the faith, the sewing-society leader, the principal singer, the good, the devoted, the zealous. No, no, Marie, we can't give you up."

"If you will give your consent to the marriage after all I shall tell you, Mr. Morgan, the bride will not be taken away from Saint John's. The great unknown, the mysterious *he*, who proposes to do me the honor, is a resident in your parish and is a member of your church."

"Impossible, Marie. There is no young gentleman in my church worthy of you. Why you're a splendid match for any man."

"It's not a young man, Mr. Morgan."

"Then I condemn the marriage without hearing you any further. Youth must not mate with old age. I am down on all those things."

"Well, hear me first, Mr. Morgan. I can avert a great calamity which impends over our house. I can save my poor

father years of agony and poverty. I can save by this marriage the Delancy manor from passing into the hands of strangers. I can—"

"Stop right there, Marie," exclaimed the clergyman earnestly. "Do you love this man?"

"No."

"Then I say to you in the name of the holy God, whom I unworthily represent, do not marry him. No, not if the fate of this whole county and the salvation of all its landed interests depend upon your decision. Do not insult the God who has instituted this holy rite of marriage. Love, love alone is the foundation of a Christian marriage. All else, all pretences, all excuses for marrying, are vain and wicked. Matrimony is a state of grace. It is one of the purest, sweetest, holiest of God's gifts to mortals. They profane it who marry for motives of lucre. The most beautiful simile that God employs to indicate his love for the church is the Song of Solomon. He could find nothing more sweet and beautiful to typify that love than the utter abandonment of two lovers to each other. To His divine intelligence there was nothing on earth so sweet and lovely as the love of a wedded pair, a Christian couple who had married for love. In the lips of the speakers in that Song of Solomon put instead of words of love, words of lucre, words of lands, tenements, and property, and see how ridiculous that Song of Solomon becomes. No, no, no, Marie. No Christian can marry for aught else than love. Then follows the grace of God to be faithful to the marriage vows. You cannot swear to love one whom you do not already love. You cannot swear to the bestowal of a future love. For love is not a thing to be put on or off at will. You cannot love everybody or anybody at will. Love is an inspiration sent down from God. Do not trifle with it, for it is holy. Do not marry without it. For that is simply legal prostitution. No, Marie, your question is answered. And since you have consulted me as your spiritual guide, I say to you, *no* / do not marry him."

"Why, Mr. Morgan," she said, "you are enthusiastic upon

the subject of love. And do you really censure what is of so common occurrence—marriage for the sake of bettering one's condition."

"I not only censure it, Marie; I denounce it."

"My own heart assents to your theory of a Christian marriage," said Miss Delancy. "But then, you know, some of us girls are apt to indulge in romantic extravagances which lead us astray. I sought your advice because you are not only the interpreter of God's law, but a man of wide and varied experience. I shall be guided by your counsel, and God knows my own instinct revolts from a marriage for policy's sake. But the circumstances attending this proposition for my hand are so singularly intermixed with the happiness and the interests of all I love on earth that I thought perhaps God would allow me to make a sacrifice of my feelings. But your counsel awakens such a cordial response in my own heart that I believe you are right."

"I am right, Marie," replied the clergyman warmly. "If you had seen the trouble, and the sin, and the agony which I have witnessed as the result of these legal outrages, you would shrink more decidedly than you do now from contracting such a false marriage. God gives in His own time and way the inspiration of a great and true love to a woman and to a man. If either of these have contracted previously a marriage for worldly considerations, then when the consciousness comes of the real and the true love, an agony results whose exquisite throes of pain no tongue can express. The great, and the pure, and the religious, struggle heroically to suffer and be silent. But, Marie, the iron has entered the soul from that hour, and from that hour life is dark, and one continuous torture. The Song of Solomon portrays the exquisite rapture of the two when they can meet and be together. How fearful, then, the anguish and the gloom of the two who meet and love but can never be together! Do you know, Marie, that I, as a Christian priest, have pondered long and earnestly that prohibition, "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder"? I

firmly believe that God has not joined together those who marry without love. I do not believe that God joins together a man and a woman for property considerations. I do not believe that the Eternal Ruler of all things recognizes all those details of eligibility which world-wise match-makers are so quick to discover. The married state demands so much of mutual forbearance, so much relinquishment of individual tastes, so much of tenderness, and so much daily nourishing of love, that only those who are attracted to it by simple love can live in it worthily before God. If this is romance, write down Henry Morgan among the romancers."

His countenance, as he spoke, was radiant with enthusiasm; and his companion realized at that moment how perfectly and devotedly her clergyman loved his own sweet wife. Their love for each other was the marvel of the parish. They were inseparable, and their tenderness and watchfulness over each other's comfort was manifest to every one who knew them.

"I do not wonder that you should be so eloquent an advocate for love, Mr. Morgan. You have known what true love is."

"Yes, thank God! yes!" he exclaimed. "My life has been sanctified and made beautiful by the love of one of the purest angels that ever lived in the guise of a mortal. My lovely wife, my angel wife. And, Marie, they called me a fool (when I was a poor young clergyman living on a miserable pittance of a salary, and almost starving), because I did not marry Mary Ackerman, the heiress, who made every advance to me that a true lady could make, and she *was* a lady. But I was dreaming of little May Fairfield, the poor school-teacher, and wondering if ever I could melt her pretty coldness, and awaken her heart. She is yonder there in that room, my little May Fairfield, and she is the mother of my children. I waited many years before I could win her, but she is mine now, and in my life she is sunshine, and hope, and beauty, and tenderness; and by her dear love for me I am living a true Heaven or earth. God will not part us in the streets of the New Jerusalem."

His voice had grown sweeter and more musical, as he spoke of his wife, and his eyes were full of tenderness at the thoughts her name suggested. Then he said, abruptly :

"But go on and tell me all your story. You must not marry this man. But all that concerns you and your family you know lies near my heart. I hold many of your family secrets, and you know how faithfully I guard them. Go on now and tell me all about your troubles on the manor, and about this man's connection with them. What is his name?"

"James Hartwell," she replied. The clergyman started, and then gazed more intently at her. Miss Delancy then narrated the whole matter to him. He listened patiently until the end. After her recital was finished he appeared to meditate deeply, keeping his eyes fixed upon the carpet at his feet. Raising his eyes to her at last, he said: "Everything that concerns the Delancy family is so near to my heart that I cannot forbear entrusting to you something which in some way may give you a check upon this man, who evidently has you all in his power. Your grandfather was so clear-headed a man, and so thoroughly master of himself, and so perfectly unembarrassed in a financial way, that I cannot comprehend his giving Hartwell the life lease. I gave your cousin a few moments ago a hint that I suspected that a certain man was the murderer of the unknown who lies buried on your manor. I did not tell him the man's name. But I will tell you, my sweet friend, under present circumstances. I know your discretion, and that you will not talk until talking becomes useful. I believe that James Hartwell committed that murder."

"Oh my God! That is fearful," exclaimed Miss Delancy. "And I was meditating marriage with this man!"

"Listen," continued the clergyman. "Hartwell has been a member of my church a great many years. I have known a great deal about his affairs. He was once notorious for his failures in business enterprises. His successes date from the night of that murder. I believe that murdered man had a large sum of money upon his person. He answers exactly to a per-

sonal description of a Jewish money-lender, whose mysterious disappearance I saw noticed in a newspaper of the day, which I found in an old bundle of newspapers at a friend's house in New York city recently. The New York papers of that day contained the advertisement of the disappearance, but our local newspapers never copied it. The advertisement stated that the money-lender, when last seen, was at a New York bank, and drew out from it all his deposits, which were very large. Now I will show you something which I found on the spot the murder was committed, while I was groping around in the dark after I had stumbled over the dead man. As I fell, one of my hands came in contact with something metallic which lay on the ground. It was very small, and I put it in my vest pocket. I forgot all about it until several days after, when I chanced to put my fingers in the pocket, which was one I seldom or never had used before. There I felt the article, and taking it out, found it was a gentleman's gold stud usually worn in the shirt-bosom. It had an Arabic character enamelled upon it in black." Here the rector exhibited the stud to her, and then continued: "I determined to carry it with me in my vest pocket, and always be on the alert to discover what person owned the studs which were its mates. It was a long time before I encountered anything like it. But after James Hartwell's return from Europe recently, I called upon him about some matters connected with the taxes of the town. The day was very hot, and he had thrown off his coat and vest and cravat and was sitting in his room, with his shirt-bosom entirely exposed from the neck to the waist. The two lower stud holes of the bosom were occupied with two gold studs bearing the Arabic character. They were exactly like the one I hold. There was a similar stud hole in the upper part of his shirt-bosom, but there was no stud in it. In place of a stud he had fastened a diamond pin over the hole, but not so closely but that I could see it. When his vest was buttoned, as I noticed afterwards, neither of the studs could be seen. Only the diamond pin appeared in the opening of the vest. This was the reason I had

never seen before the mates of the stud I had in my possession. I said to him at the time, 'Mr. Hartwell, you wear a singular device on your studs. It is an Arabic character.'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'I bought them because they were odd. There were three of them, but I lost one.'"

As he concluded, the speaker took from his vest pocket the Arabic stud, and again exhibited it to Miss Delancy. Then he resumed the subject of conversation again :

"A few weeks ago I placed in the hands of a New York detective the newspaper advertisement of the money-lender's disappearance years ago. I also gave to him the information regarding Hartwell's lost stud, and also the fact that his pecuniary success appeared to date from the night of the murder. Perhaps we shall hear something from this detective in the future. But you cannot fail to see the importance of this murder being traced to Hartwell. If he committed murder he must die. The instant of his death his life lease expires, and the manor reverts to your father as your grandfather's heir."

"It is hard to think that our security at the manor depends upon the execution of Mr. Hartwell," she said.

"Yes, Marie. Every human heart revolts at the idea of a man dying by the hands of his fellow-man. But I do not see how otherwise the law of God and the interests of civilized society can be maintained. But tell me, are you certain that Mr. Sampson was right about Hartwell really having a lease of the manor for life. Did he show you the lease?"

"No, but he said he would satisfy any lawyer I would send to him that it was so."

"And have you consulted any lawyer regarding it?"

"I have this very day ; my kinsman, Judge Livingston, has gone now to see Mr. Sampson about it, and he said, moreover, that he would ride over to the county clerk's office and see if such a lease was recorded there. He will comprehend the whole case before he returns to me, rest assured."

"Do not fail to notify me, Marie, of the result of his investi-

gations," said the clergyman. "I am deeply concerned about you and your family."

"I will write to you what Judge Livingston says, if I am not able to ride over here myself and bring the news in person. Now, good-by. I am very grateful to you for the advice you have given me regarding this marriage. Good-by."

He shook her hand cordially at parting, and then followed her down the walk to the gate, where her cousin Markham was awaiting her with the horse and buggy. They entered the vehicle and drove off, the clergyman and his little girls waving them a farewell with their hands. . . .

In two months from the day Mr. Sampson had approached Miss Delancy with Hartwell's proposal for marriage the whole county had learned the news that the ancient family of Delancy had lost the manor. Everybody knew that the day had been designated by agreement between Hartwell and Arthur Delancy when the family should vacate the premises and go forth impoverished upon the world. As usual, the few friends of the family came to call and express their sympathy, and the great mass of friends stayed away, fortified by the ever-ready excuses such cattle find. The fashionable world is too busy to call upon unfortunates, and so the Delancy family found abundance of leisure to pack up and carry away their personal property, much of which they would be compelled to sell to raise the means of present existence, until they could find some way of earning their bread. The greater part of the furniture of the manor-house, and the works of art, and the library books, were sold at auction on the premises, and James Hartwell bid in nearly all of it. At length the day arrived when Hartwell was to enter and take possession of the manor-house and the family of Arthur Delancy was to move out. It was a bright day in December, but the cold was intense. The ponds and streams of the manor were frozen, but there was no snow upon the ground. The trees stood solemn and leafless, and the fallen leaves were gathered in piles upon the frozen ground, where they had been huddled together by the gale. The

smoke slowly ascended from the chimneys of the manor-house, where bright wood fires were burning upon the hearths. The only member of the family who seemed to be in perfect possession of her faculties, and to bear up philosophically, was Marie Delancy. She was busy everywhere, directing, packing, sending the servants here and there, and starting away the teamsters with the loads of furniture and baggage, as fast as the wagons had received large enough burdens.

There was much to do, and she was the great doer of the family upon this occasion. Her father, who was one of the most energetic men living, and whose quick, nervous step had always been heard when there was work to do, and whose directing tones were as skillful and efficient on other occasions as a general's, now seemed to be paralyzed with the misfortune which had fallen upon his house. He did not seem to care how, when, or where the teamsters carried off his property. He left everything to the care of his servants and to his daughter. But there were people from the manor present, engaged in helping the family, or in idle curiosity watching this breaking up of the ancient dignities, who detected mischief in the eyes of Arthur Delancy as he roved from room to room, or found his way bareheaded out to the galleries or walks connected with or leading to the house. There was a malignity of expression and a compression of the lips which denoted desperation, and that it was better not to cross him in this mood. Marie detected it, too, and knew that it was the most intense mortification and agony that her father was undergoing. So she watched him covertly whenever she found a moment's leisure from her duties as presiding genius of the departure. Her own emotions were intense, but her power of concealment was wonderful. Her father did not know the sacrifice she had contemplated making for his sake, and that the clergyman had warned her away from it. But her grandmother knew it, and had promised to be silent regarding it. Where was this venerable lady? The question was asked again and again by the strangers who were assisting the family; but they received in reply only

this response: "She does not choose to make her appearance until the carriage comes to take her away."

At length Miss Delancy finding that every box, and bundle, and article of furniture that were to be carried away with them were sent away from the house, and that she now had a leisure hour for reflection, started up the stairs in the new part of the manor-house to see what her grandmother was doing, and to assist her in packing her trunks if necessary. She found the door of the private parlor closed and locked, but it was opened at her call, and she entered. Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was arrayed in her travelling dress, and appeared to be all ready for departure, with the exception of a large trunk which was packed so full that the top would not shut down close enough for her to lock it.

"I'm all ready, but that," she said, pointing to the overloaded trunk.

"Perhaps I can pack some of the things tighter," said Miss Delancy, seating herself upon the floor, and commencing to take out some of the bundles from the trunk. "Goodness!" she exclaimed, "what is this?" at the same time letting a canvas bag fall heavily upon the carpet. The bag was heavy like lead, and as she let it drop, a clinking sound as of metal was heard.

"What is it?" she inquired, again.

"It's gold, Marie," was the reply. "Your Uncle Robert sent it to me a few days ago, in response to a letter I wrote him. You needn't look so astonished; my brother is wealthy, and he loaned it to me for a special purpose. Goodness knows if I ever shall be able to pay it back to him. But then he is a very kind brother to me, and he will give me plenty of time."

"Why, grandmother," she said again, "there must be a thousand dollars in that bag."

"More than that, Marie; but never mind now. Do you think you can get the top down so I can lock it?"

The skillful hands of the young lady were rapidly demonstrat-

ing that the top could be made to come down. The bundles which she had taken out were assuming smaller proportions, and were being forced more compactly into the trunk.

"There!" she exclaimed triumphantly, as the last article of wearing apparel was forced into the trunk. "Now you see there is just room for the bag."

With both her hands she lifted the bag of gold, and dropped it into its place. Then she closed the trunk and locked it.

"Thank you, my darling, how efficient you are. But tell me how you can keep up your spirits so. I am overwhelmed at this calamity that has fallen upon the family."

"That's because you're not a Delancy, grandmother," she said archly, and looking up from her seat upon the carpet.

"No, no!" said the old lady, fiercely. "I am no Delancy to submit and smile when spoilers take away the last vestige of dignity from an old family."

"They can't take away our dignity, grandmother," she said calmly. "That never can be lost to any one without their own act."

"Tut, tut, child, in this country dignity goes with property. Qualities are no longer considered here. Money, money is the standard of excellence now. Who have called upon us in our misfortune? Do you not see that all have deserted us as soon as our money was gone from us?"

"The great and the good have come to us. What more do we want, grandmother? Has not Judge Livingston clung to us to the last? Is there a more gifted man, or a purer family blood than his? Do not all respect him? And who is a finer and truer gentleman friend than our own noble rector, Mr. Morgan. What do we care for the Fitz Noodles and the Fitz Boodles, with all their money and their fine carriages. They have no ideas, no intellectual culture. They can't entertain me for five minutes. I don't think such people are any loss to us. No, grandmother, I feel as keenly as you do the loss of this dear old home, because it is my home, and was my mother's home, and all the tenderest associations of my life are here.

But I don't care a copper for the loss of this place simply because it deprives us of a little consideration from wealthy people or from those who worship wealth. Money is good. Money is comfortable. But love, friendship, honor, integrity, are dearer than money, and money can't buy them. No, no, grandmother. I am a Delancy, and I'm not afraid of losing my dignity because the manor goes from us."

She arose from the carpet, and, walking away, said, "The carriage for us will be here soon. You had better come down in the dining-room until we start; it is warmer there."

"No, you can call me when you are ready to start," replied the old lady. "I will not encounter the Hartwell tribe when they drive up to take possession. I can't smile upon those people. It's not in me. I'm of a fiercer stock than the Delancy race. I'll remain in my rooms until I can go straight to the carriage."

"How vindictive poor grandmother is!" thought Miss Delancy, as she descended the stairs and heard the door behind her shut to with a bang and the key turn in the lock. She passed along the tortuous halls of the new building and entered the straight, broad, low halls of the earlier Delancy families. There was a commotion going on among the servants below, for they had espied the vehicles crossing the manor which were bringing the Hartwells to their new home. One, two, three carriages were coming, and the sky was darkening, the sunshine had disappeared, and the clouds of leaden hue were covering the sky. A storm was brewing. The apartments of the manor-house and the halls were assuming a gloomy appearance which the fires on the great hearths seemed scarcely to alleviate. As Miss Delancy was looking out of one of the great windows which gave a view of the distant carriages rumbling their way over the frozen ground, the branches of the trees began to toss their naked forms upward in the rush of the gale, as if they were arms supplicating heaven for mercy upon the sad-hearted family about to abandon their home. The gale waxed in intensity, the trees whistled in the wind, and wails of

distress seemed to issue from the chimneys and complicated angles of the old mansion. Then the snow-storm burst in full fury over the estate, the capricious and whirling flakes for a moment flying straight forward at the house windows, and then were caught by a contrary wind and tossed upward only to fall again and settle upon the frozen ground. In the midst of the obscurity and the darkness the inmates of the house heard the tramping feet of the new-comers upon the great gallery. As Miss Delancy issued from a side apartment to receive them, her father, bareheaded, pale, but singularly calm, came out from his study, and accosting Mr. Hartwell, said :

"Come this way, sir, if you please. I wish to see you alone before I leave. Come into my study, this way." And conducting Mr. Hartwell along the halls to a remote part of the new house, he flung open a door for him and followed him into the apartment. In less than ten minutes the whole household were startled by the cry of "*help, help—murder.*"

CHAPTER VI.

*"Then women shrieked and strong men shouted out,
And Perseus ran to those that drew about
The slain old man, and asked them of his name."*

The Doom of King Acrisius.



H! my God. I knew it. I knew it!" shouted Lawrence Dabney, the gardener, running along the halls, followed by the whole frightened array of servants of both families. Dashing along into the remote part of the house whence the cries seemed to come, they all paused before the closed door of a room whence issued sounds of a fearful struggle. Furniture was being knocked about in the combat, and the tramping of feet followed by a heavy fall indicated that the victim was fighting hard for his life. They tried to open

the door, but it was locked on the inside and its heavy oaken panels and massive lock resisted all their efforts to burst it in. Again they heard an effort to cry murder, but it was a smothered cry, as if strangled out by a powerful grip on the throat. The servants renewed their efforts to burst in the door, but the resistance of the wood was like iron.

"Run, run, for a timber under the shed," cried the voice of the gardener again. "He is being strangled; run, all of you, for God's sake."

Two or three of the servants seemed to retain enough of their sense to know that this command must be obeyed instantly if they wanted to save the man's life. They accordingly ran down the hall for the timber, and in doing so came violently in contact with the ladies who were hastening to the scene of blood. Lawrence Dabney, in the meantime, incited the men remaining with him to put their united shoulders against the door and attempt to force it in. All was unavailing. The wood and lock were alike impregnable. They listened then, and heard something being dragged over the carpet. It seemed to pass away out of hearing as if into another room. They ran down the hall farther and tried the doors of other rooms. But all were locked and equally able to resist their united assault.

"I knew it, I knew it," exclaimed the gardener again. "I saw it in his eye all day. I knew he couldn't stand it. Oh merciful God! he's murdered him. These Delancy people are the devil when they git aroused."

They listened intently at the doors again. But all sounds had ceased. The ladies of Hartwell's family and Miss Delancy were standing amongst the servants, and pale as ghosts. They were utterly appalled at the tragedy and the hopelessness of giving succor. Who was murdered and who was the murderer? This was problematical. Who would solve it? Presently, after several minutes' delay, the servants appeared with a long stick of timber to be used as a battering ram to open the door.

"You idiots," shouted Dabney, "you've got too long a

timber : you can't turn around in the hall with it, don't you see, you infernal fools." And sure enough they could not bring the end of the improvised ram to bear upon the door. Here was another delay. Again they went after a timber, and other servants joined them in the search for a shorter one. By the time a second battering ram had arrived, and just as they were preparing to use it upon the door, to their surprise, the door opened, and Arthur Delancy appeared.

"What means all this confusion?" he said, addressing the assembled crowd. He was very pale, but perfectly self-possessed, and there was not the slightest manifestation of disorder in his person or dress. They shrank away from him, so commanding was his mien, and so impressed were they with the conviction that he was in a dangerous mood.

"What does all this noise mean?" he demanded again. "Why are you all here? Who locked this door on the inside, and where is Mr. Hartwell? I left him sitting in that chair before the fire until I could get some papers from my safe. Where is he?"

"Do you not know, Mr. Delancy, where he is?" said the gardener, mustering up courage to confront the supposed murderer.

"Certainly not, sir, or why would I ask?" replied Arthur Delancy sternly.

The crowd looked at each other, some in amazement, some significantly. But the gardener was the only one who seemed bold enough to tell the truth. He came out with it fearlessly enough :

"We heard the cry of murder from this room, sir, where we heard you invite Mr. Hartwell in. You and he had not been shut in here together more than ten minutes before we heard a loud cry for 'help, help—murder,' and so we all ran here to help whoever was in trouble. We tried the door and found it locked. So we meant to batter the door down with that timber."

"This is very strange," exclaimed Arthur Delancy ; "come

in here all of you : I heard no cry of any kind. Nor did I lock the door. Marie, are *you* there? What does all this mean? Did you hear this cry for help."

"Oh yes, father, I did," she replied, deeply agitated. "And so did Mr. Hartwell's sister who was standing in the dining-room with me."

"What can this all mean?" he exclaimed again. "I heard nothing."

While he was speaking, the crowd were eagerly looking about the apartment and peering into the adjoining rooms. There was no sign of a murder having been committed. The furniture did not appear to be unusually disordered. But they had heard the sounds of the death struggle, and nothing could divest them of the conviction that murder had taken place. Some of them kept a fixed, steady gaze into Arthur Delancy's face, and watched every motion he made when speaking. He was pale, but surprise seemed to be the principal idea in his mind.

"We believe that Mr. James Hartwell has been murdered in this room," said one of Hartwell's domestics at last, boldly confronting Delancy. "And it's very strange that the only man who came in here with him don't know anything about it ; yes, sir, it's so strange that the law will take hold of it, and justice will be done ; you can rely upon it."

"Do you mean to charge me, sir, with murdering Mr. Hartwell?" The terrible Delancy eyes began to blaze. But the servant could not be intimidated in a moment like this.

"Will you please to explain to us, sir, how we all could hear this cry and you could not."

"Perhaps I may be able to," said Delancy, quite calmly. "I told you all that upon entering this room I seated Mr. Hartwell in that chair before the fire, as he had just come in from the storm. I wanted to talk to him about some tenants of the manor who had not paid their rents, and for the elucidation of the matter to him I had to go to my safe for the papers. I went out through that inner door and shut it behind me, to

keep the heat in this room. I then passed through three other doors, shutting them behind me, until I came to the vault where I keep my safe. I may have been in the vault when the cry occurred. Here are the papers relating to the tenants in my hands. I was bringing them to show to Mr. Hartwell, when, to my surprise, I found he had left his chair. Then I heard your noises in the hall, and crossing the room to the hall door, to my surprise I found it locked. But suppose you come, sir, with me," he said to Hartwell's servant who had confronted him. "Yes, three or four of you come with me to my safe and see if we can hear a loud outcry made in this room. You, Dabney, stand here, and after you think we have had plenty of time to reach the vault, you cry 'help, help—murder.'"

His proposal was at once accepted, and three men went with him from room to room, closing the doors behind them until they entered the stone vault where the safe was deposited, Arthur Delancy leading them into the vault with a lamp which he took from a mantel-piece and lighted.

"Now let us see," he said, standing before his safe, which was open, "what we shall hear."

The four stood silent in the vault attentively listening. They heard nothing. They stood several minutes longer. No sound came to them.

"Have you all stayed here long enough," he said at length, "to test the truth of what I told you? I certainly heard no cry while I was hunting for these papers in my safe." The three expressed themselves perfectly satisfied that no sound could have reached the safe from that room, and they immediately returned to the rest of the party and learned to their surprise that Dabney had repeatedly shouted at the top of his lungs, "murder, murder!"

But the terrible reality stared every one in the face. Hartwell was missing, and some one had cried for "help, help—murder." Who else was missing, they all inquired? Who could have cried for help? They looked about them to see who was missing. No one was missing. "Yes! there is one person

who should be here," exclaimed the gardener, "one person besides Mr. Hartwell."

"And who is that?" said Arthur Delancy, still standing amongst them and holding the papers in his hands.

"Mrs. Jourdan Delancy," replied the gardener. "Where is she? Some of us must find her. Perhaps she has heard this cry. Why certainly," he said with startling earnestness, as if recollecting something which had escaped him before, "she occupies the very room over this, and must have heard it plainer than any of us."

Miss Delancy immediately, upon this suggestion, hurried up the stairway close at hand, followed by several of the party, most, however, awaiting her report at the foot of the stairs, where Arthur Delancy had taken a stand.

The eyes of the gardener were never taken off the person of the late proprietor of the manor. He was suspicious, and would not readily abandon the idea of Delancy's violence, which had haunted him all day. The instant Miss Delancy and her companions, one of whom was Hartwell's sister, reached the hall at the head of the stairs, they felt a strong current of air blowing across the hall from the open door of the library which adjoined Mrs. Jourdan Delancy's bedchamber. They heard, too, more distinctly, the violent rush of the gale, and then to their surprise snow-flakes fluttered into the air and fell upon the floor of the hall, coming apparently from the library on the wings of the wind. They looked in at the library door and found one of the windows open to the storm, which was beating in and covering the carpet with snow. Miss Delancy immediately shut the window down, with an exclamation of surprise at the carelessness which had left the library exposed to the storm. Then she said, approaching the door which connected the library with her grandmother's bedroom, "This is her room—let us inquire what noises she has heard below her."

She rapped upon the door of the bedchamber. No answer came. She tried the door. It was locked from the inside.

"We will go around through the hall," she said, "to her parlor, which adjoins this bedroom."

The party were soon standing before the private parlor door. It was partly open. They looked in, Miss Delancy pushing the door farther open for them. They entered, and the first object that met their gaze was Mrs. Jourdan Delancy holding on to the corner of the mantel-piece and looking towards the hall door, with her black eyes full of terror.

"What is the matter, grandmother?" said Miss Delancy, noting at once the look of apprehension. "Have you heard anything?"

"Yes, yes, the cry of murder. Somebody has been murdered down in the room under me."

"We all heard it," exclaimed several of the party who accompanied Miss Delancy. "But did you hear anything else?" said Miss Hartwell.

"Yes, I did," said the old lady significantly.

"What? What?" said they all.

"I heard something, and I saw something."

All gathered about her now in eager curiosity, and with terrified looks, asking innumerable questions, and not giving Mrs. Delancy an opportunity to answer any of them in the confusion. At last she said :

"And have none of you met him in the house?"

"Met who? Met who?" was the rapid and ungrammatical response.

"The man in the black mask. He must have gone out through some of the halls. Did none of you see him? He wore a black domino and a black mask. He came in through my library window. I heard him raise the sash and spring down upon the floor. He came then along the hall and looked in upon me. I screamed when I saw him, but none of you came to me. As soon as I screamed he fled away. But I couldn't tell which way he went, for his feet seemed to be in felt shoes, so noiselessly did he move about. It is strange no one in the house saw him."

"No, no, it is not," said Miss Delancy, "for we all were gathered at the door of father's study. The front part of the house was deserted, and he might have gone out through any one of these halls and stairways."

"He may be in the house yet," suggested Miss Hartwell. "Had we not better call to the people below to search the house? Oh! my brother; my brother! what has he done with my brother."

"And who are you?" inquired Mrs. Jourdan Delancy; "and what is it about your brother?"

"I am the sister of James Hartwell, madame, the Mr. Hartwell who just came to take possession of the manor. Somebody has killed my brother and we can't find his body."

"James Hartwell dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Delancy.

"Yes, yes," replied the young lady quickly. "He went into Mr. Arthur Delancy's study with him and that is the last we saw of him. He is not there now. And Mr. Delancy says he left him sitting alone in a chair by the fire, and that is the last seen of him. Somebody cried murder from that room, but the door was locked and we couldn't get in. We heard him dragged away over the carpet. But when Mr. Delancy opened the door nobody was there except Mr. Delancy."

"My son, Arthur?"

"Yes, madame; he said somebody locked the door from the inside without his knowledge, while he was gone to his safe, several rooms farther back; and he didn't hear any cry either."

While this dialogue was going on, Miss Delancy understanding better the necessity for speed, had slipped out of the room and descended the stairs to the party collected there. Quickly narrating the grandmother's story, she stirred them all up to immediate activity in guarding the avenues of egress from the house, and searching all the rooms for the man in the black mask. Every one ran away at her bidding to different quarters of the house, to intercept the murderer; even the gardener, for the moment, dropping his suspicions of Arthur Delancy, and hastening away with him to search the front rooms of the house

and the chambers and halls above. In the course of their thorough examination of the house, they came to the library window indicated by Mrs. Jourdan Delancy. Miss Delancy threw it up again, showing them how she found it, with a strange stick propping the sash up that the murderer might enter the library. Looking out into the storm, they saw a ladder resting against the sill of the window, by which the man in the mask might readily have ascended from a window of Mr. Delancy's study to the library without being seen by any one. The snow, however, was flying so thickly, and was so rapidly changing its bed in the whirl of the gale, that it was impossible to determine with certainty whether there were foot-prints on the ladder or not. It was easy for a man to leap from the study window on to the ladder, without touching the ground at all. Mr. Delancy told them also that neither of the two windows connected by the ladder had any catch which would prevent their being raised with ease from within or without. But the mystery that suggested itself to every mind was, how any person not familiar with the house and the location of the ladder could move about with such apparent facility and celerity, and escape observation after the commission of so great a crime. Where had the black mask gone, after frightening Mrs. Delancy? Their united efforts to track him had been futile. He could not be found. And stranger still, the body of Hartwell could not be found. The murderer often escapes observation; the body of the murdered rarely accompanies the murderer in his flight. Where was the corpse of Hartwell? Had he been murdered at all? What evidence existed of the murder having been committed? The cry for help, and the disappearance of Hartwell, and the suspicious, nay, almost damning evidence of every one's ears at the door of the study. That was a death-struggle, if ever a death-struggle could be sworn to by the evidence of the ear alone. While the terrified or determined groups were discussing the matter through the house, after their futile search, and were growing more and more perplexed every moment at the obscurity which

seemed to overhang the whole affair, a cry was heard. All gathered to the spot at the door of Arthur Delancy's study, where the cry was raised. A man, one of the explorers, had opened a window of the study from the inside; and had leaped out upon the rounds of the ladder. He had detected upon the window-casing outside marks of blood, where the escaping murderer had placed his hand, either to facilitate his leap from the window, or to close it after he was upon the rounds of the ladder. Upon looking down he saw some object sticking out of the snow upon the ground. It was a dagger, with marks of blood upon the blade and hilt. He stood now with it held daintily in his fingers, that the stains of blood might not be effaced. There seemed no further refuge left for incredulity. But where had the corpse been spirited to. It was almost crediting the supernatural to believe that one man had borne the corpse of Hartwell up a ladder with him, and had escaped from the house with his bloody burden, unseen and untraceable by the marks of blood upon the floors. The time for the commission of the crime and the escape had been surely limited to the fifteen minutes which had elapsed between the time Hartwell had entered the study, and the time Arthur Delancy had made his appearance to the assembled crowd.

This was all the evidence of crime that was ever elicited. Neither Hartwell nor his murderer could be found. The startling tragedy in a few days had been circulated over the entire county, and soon became known to the public press of the State. A most patient and persistent search of the manor-house and the woods adjoining was made the day after the murder by officers of the law; but no trace of a corpse, hidden or buried or dragged away, could be found. James Hartwell, dead or alive, was never seen again by his friends or neighbors.

But on the night following the murder something transpired which is detailed for the reader's benefit, and to deepen still further the mystery attending this tragedy. So fully were both families, the incoming and the outgoing parties, impressed with the necessity of arranging everything to satisfy the public, who

in a few days would be demanding a faithful account of actions and movements, that they agreed together that no one should leave the manor-house on that fearful night of storm and death, except one messenger, who should be dispatched to the nearest magistrate, to bring him with all speed, together with officers of the court, to take the depositions of all witnesses present, and, if necessary, to make arrests.

"This is the most desirable course for us all to pursue," said Arthur Delancy, when Hartwell's mother and sister proposed it. "If I am a murderer, as some of you seem to think, I ought not to be allowed to leave these premises. If I am not a murderer, and Mr. Hartwell has been slain, there will be no necessity for my leaving the manor at all. For, if Hartwell is dead, of course his tenancy for life has expired, and the manor reverts to me as the heir of my father. There has been no claim to the manor, further than a life estate, which expires upon the death of Mr. Hartwell. I think it is best for all of us to remain here to-night, and perhaps you had better keep me under guard."

These words were given calmly, almost defiantly. And so Arthur Delancy was put under guard, at his request, in his study, until the magistrate should arrive. The two families soon fraternized sufficiently to arrange a family meal between them in the great dining-hall. It was a solemn party that gathered about the supper table, all of both families being present, except Arthur Delancy, who was under strict surveillance in his study. For the first time in years, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy came to the dining-hall to take a meal with the family. From a high-backed oaken chair of great antiquity, she looked across the table radiant with lamps, to the mother of the murdered Hartwell. The mother of the late proprietor looked at the mother of the new proprietor of the estate, and endeavored to conciliate her, to show by her courtesies and kind words that she was no party to the animosities which would naturally arise upon such an occasion. But the old lady's efforts were useless. Mrs. Hartwell, aged and taciturn, and goaded almost to mad-


ness by the distress and the disappointments attendant upon her son's disappearance, could not be cajoled or soothed to friendship. She suspected, and she suspected strongly, that Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was a partner, or at the least a sympathizer in her son's crime. And so she answered in monosyllables, and ever and anon watched the keen, black eyes opposite to her, as if she feared at any moment some treacherous cup of poisoned tea would be served to her by order of her aged antagonist. Miss Delancy and Miss Hartwell, on the contrary, being young, and without the guile and the suspicion engendered by age and experience, soon managed to converse easily together, and without any apparent jealousy or mistrust. They had known each other slightly in the choir of Rev. Mr. Morgan's church. They were not disposed to foster hostility and uncharitableness toward each other, until there might arise something to warrant it. There was a brother of Hartwell also at the table, a solid-looking, blue-eyed man of thirty, who seemed to be more occupied in ministering to the inner man than in meditating upon catastrophes, or in studying the peculiarities of the strangers about him. And so the supper went coldly and formally on.

In another quarter of the mansion was a prisoner under guard. He was buried in profound reflection, sitting in an arm-chair with a high back, against which his head rested at ease. The fire on the hearth burned brightly before him. Great sections of logs had been heaped upon the fire, and they snapped and crackled away in the strong draft right merrily, as if murder had never been the demon-guard of the apartment. Behind the prisoner was seated his guard with loaded gun, intent upon keeping his charge within the four walls of the room for the night. Lights were burning upon the mantelpiece, and, with the firelight, gave brilliancy to the scene. Books in elegant cases were on every side, and comfortable furniture, which had been purchased from the Delancy family at the auction sale by the man who had now gone to his last account. What rendered the brilliantly lighted scene solemn?

Death, murder, and the uncertainties of the morrow. Aye! there were other things abroad that were well calculated to add solemnity to the prisoner's reflections. The gale was howling over the mansion, and wails as of human agony came from the angles and chimneys of the manor-house. The storm-fiend had come to the realm of the murder-fiend, to carry on wild revel with him. Do the evil spirits who exult in crime find kindred spirits in the howls of the storm and the blackness of the midnight? Was the prisoner thinking of this as his ear caught the violence of the tempest, and heard the snow-flakes tinkling against the window-pane, and his eye saw the ashes on the hearth stirred by the wind? To-morrow he might be shivering in a felon's cell! The cruel eyes of an enraged crowd might be gloating over his misery. He might be found guilty of murder, and the hangman's rope might be his portion. Was he innocent? His heart, as he sat there deeply meditating the tragedy, told him yes. There was no murder upon his soul. But he realized how cruelly he was situated. How difficult it would be to clear his skirts of suspicion. An ignorant or a prejudiced jury might find him guilty. Perhaps they would decide that he and the man with the black mask were identical, or perhaps were confederates. The circumstances would inevitably point to some inmate of the house as the murderer. Could Arthur Delancy escape? He sat there, the representative of an ancient and honored house, and knew that he could avert suspicion from himself by one word. By one word could this proud gentleman turn the tide of feeling away from himself. Would he utter that word, or would he screen another at the sacrifice of himself? As he sat there, a prisoner, with the fiendish howls of the storm about him, Arthur Delancy said to his own heart, "I will never speak." Was he thus a partner in the crime? Alas! he knew and recognized at once *the dagger*.

CHAPTER VII.

*"Don Ramiro, icy cold
Are the hands that mine do hold."
The Shadow.*

HE inmates of the house were asleep. Arthur Delancy slumbered at last in his chair, the sentry watching him. The only sounds now were from without. The snow was drifting, and banking up against the gables of the rambling old mansion or clicking against the windows. A white pall was fast forming over the plains and undulating ground of the manor. The trees were covered with snow one instant and then a freshening of the gale cleared them again. The air was thick with the blinding flakes which the wind tossed hither and thither. Presently, in the solitude of the midnight, there was a slow and muffled tramp in the snow. Something white was approaching one of the lower windows from the direction of the manor stables. In the obscurity of the storm it looked like a pillar of snow moving forward. Nearer and nearer it came, but pausing at intervals. This moving spectre in white at last reached a window, and there halted, turning around in every direction. Then something like an arm came out from the vague outline of this whiteness and projected a missile up against a window in the second story. It was a signal. One alone heard it in the house. After the glass rattled at the touch of the hard but tiny projectile Mrs. Jourdan Delancy came to the window, listened carefully, and then slowly raised the sash. It made but little noise in raising, so cautiously and slowly was it done. Then she went away from the window and presently returned with a canvas bag, small but heavy. She held this as far out from the window as her arm could reach, and then let it drop to the white object awaiting it. The bag fell into the snow with a metallic *click*. The disguised man picked it up, waved his white arm to the window, and then moved off through the storm in the same deliberate and careful manner in which he had approached.

Mrs. Jourdan Delancy cautiously closed the window and again sought her bed. What had she cast out into the storm? Was it the price of blood?

The man in white slowly moved on towards the stables, his footfalls muffled by the snow. He was as deliberate and slow in his movements as if no keen ears were listening from the manor-house. His pace was not the precipitate and terror-stricken flight of the murderer, but the assured step of one who knew his locality thoroughly and was not likely to be surprised at that late hour. On and on he waded in the snow until his receding form seemed to blend with the millions of snow-flakes which were flying around him. He reached the manor stables and heard the stamping of horses' feet upon the plank floor. The sound boomed dull and heavy through the storm-wrapped night. He slowly opened the door of the barn, and depositing his canvas bag upon the floor, approached the mass of hay which was piled on one side, and parting the mass drew from it, with mighty effort, a white bag, some seven feet long, and filled with a heavy substance which seemed to demand all his strength to haul it out upon the bare floor. Had he lain upon the floor in his white garment he would have been *a fac simile* of the bag and its contents. The tableau was like one bag erect and the other prostrate; one white bag animate and the other fallen and inanimate. But there was an indescribable something in the long white bag as it lay stretched upon the barn floor which indicated that its contents were not of the soft, pliable character of flour or grain which accommodates itself to the various forms into which the bag may be pushed. There was a more rigid resistance of the substance in the bag, and as he drew it out from the cover of the hay it had the heavy inertia of a marble statue. What is it? The question seemed to be repeated by the wind outside. "What is it?" howled the gale. and the angles of the barn seemed to shriek "What is it?" Is there intelligence in the passing wind which scents evil?

The man in white finding that his inanimate bag was ready for his purpose glided out of the barn, and in a few moments

returned with a white steed saddled and bridled. With a mighty effort he stooped and raised the inanimate bag, flinging it across the shoulders of the horse. Then he took up the little bag flung to him a few minutes before from the window of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, and depositing it in his bosom under the folds of his ghostly robe, he mounted the steed and slowly walked him out from the barn into the storm. As he came out into the white field of snow he was scarcely distinguishable from the snow-storm itself. Strange spectacle! A white rider, a white steed, a white burden, the latter hanging stiffly across the shoulders of the horse as if it was frozen. Slowly, and with muffled footfalls, the steed moved onward, onward past the manor-house, silent and gloomy in the storm. No lights gleamed from the windows on the side of the house the white spectacle was passing. On, on, on went the steed, and the rider, and the frozen burden. They entered the avenue of elms through which the gale was shrieking, they ploughed their way through the drifts which had formed along the road, and presently they came to the bridge across the manor stream. The planks sounded hollow and muffled to the beat of the horse's hoofs. They were over the bridge and crossing the meadows, and the storm was already flinging over them its own mantle of white. But right on into the gale and the fluttering sea of flakes they advanced, and the pace of the steed was quickened. He bounded forward now at a word of excitation from his master, and the gale whistled more shrilly to their flight. Up and down the undulating grounds of the manor they sped on. They passed the dark line of pine woods whose branches were loaded and bending with snow. They skirted the frozen lake and arose to the summit of the great hill beyond it. They plunged down the other slope of the hill and came out into the meadows stretching away to the porter's lodge. How would they pass the porter's gate? That question must be determined soon, for the rapid pace was bringing them nearer and nearer to the light streaming out from the porter's lodge. Through the storm the warning light was showing more dis-

tinctly every instant, and soon the gate of the manor would bar the way. But on, right on, bounded steed, and rider, and frozen burden. They never swerved from the road but held on their way straight for the gate. Then, with a word of command to the horse, and within a pistol shot of the porter's lodge, the rider turned to the right and rode away across the snow-covered grass with wonderful accuracy to a break in the manor fence which had been temporarily closed by laying a timber across the gap. With promptness and skill the horse was brought up sidewise to the timber, and the rider's hand pushed it off the fence. It fell, and left a passage-way for the steed. In another moment the spectre-like horse and rider were bounding along the public highway.

The storm held on in its career of violence without cessation for a moment. The snow upon the ground was deepening, and despite the gusts of wind which tossed it everywhere, it was securing a hold upon the roofs and window-sills of houses and barns. The trees, too, along the highway were beginning to hold the white covering, and the tops of fences were assuming a certain symmetry in the plastic touch of the snow. But on, past the silent and gloomy houses of the farmers—on, past white fields, and through dark woods, and down narrow ravines, bounded with steady pace, the white steed, white rider, and ominous white burden. What wonderful value attached to the stiff, white bag across the shoulders of the horse, that thus it must be borne so late at night, and so carefully, over miles and miles of snow-bound country? Did it hold the ransom of some mighty chief, held prisoner by his foes? Was it the gold to redeem some great estate encumbered, or was it the treasure of a banker being transferred to a distant city for reimbursement? It was not gold, or else the clinking of it would be heard with every footfall of the horse. It was lighter than gold, and yet there was a dead inertia in the way it hung half stiffening across the shoulders of the steed, which suggested weight and limberness in the same instant. The falling snow was accumulating upon its rigid outlines, and still up and down, up

and down, it went, with the motions of the horse, and the rider, in his domino of white and his white mask, went up and down, up and down, behind it. Where were the three going? Hours were passing away, the road was becoming more impassable every minute, and ere long, their advance would be checked. It was already checked in a degree, for the speed of the horse had relaxed, and he now went at a walk. Where would the solemn, silent, storm-bound journey end? Not a human being had they passed upon the road. The hour was too late for honest folk to be abroad. The farmers were sleeping in their snow-clad dwellings, and the howl of the gale alone was upon the highway.

Finally, as the steed waded slowly through the drifts of snow, the rider detected in the east the first brightness which heralded the coming day. There was a whiteness upon that sky, which was not pleasant to the guiding spirit of that ominous trio. Where should he turn with his frozen, rigid treasure that the eyes of men might not rest upon it? He looked anxiously out through the eyes of his mask for a turning point. At last, as the beams of the morning began to outline objects vaguely, he came to a cross-road, filled with snow, but leading to a dense pine wood. He turned his steed into it, and slowly the powerful beast waded through it with his animate and his inanimate load. Patiently, perseveringly, and arduously the steed floundered on through the snow. He had nearly reached the cover of the pine wood, when a cry went up from the highway behind him. The rider turned in his white robe, and looked anxiously over his shoulder. Again the cry was raised, and he heard it at intervals. But now reassured that it was only the call of some enterprising farmer up early and breaking the road with his team, he urged his steed forward and soon entered the cover of the pine-trees. Pushing ahead until he was entirely concealed from view by the undergrowth of young pines, he halted his steed and sprang from his back into the snow. Securing his horse to the trunk of a young pine, he proceeded at once to trample down the snow for several feet in every direc-

tion, thus forming in time a circle around his horse in which he could walk with comparative ease. Then he put his back to the long white bag upon the steed's shoulders and lifted it off, depositing it upon the ground. It lay there upon the trampled snow, the heavy, frozen, shapeless mass of white, and the horseman was careful not to tread upon it as he walked back and forth. He was trying to renew in his own body the circulation of his blood which had been chilled and stagnant in his long, cold, and arduous night ride. But he seemed to manifest no anxiety to give animation to the shapeless mass which seemed to press outward the canvas of the long, white bag. But still he was dainty of its contents and meant that no harm should come to it. For he drew it far away to one side of the circle, lest the uneasy hoofs of the horse might strike it and tear the bag. Was he afraid its contents might be thus exposed?

As the morning sun at length mounted to the zenith it contrived to break through the clouds, and the snow-storm ceased. It was noon when the last straggling flakes ceased to fall. Sunshine succeeded to the gloom, and the sound of sleigh-bells was heard tinkling along the highway. The masked rider, who had been all the morning walking or standing in the circle, when he heard the sleigh-bells, climbed a short way up the branches of an adjoining pine and surveyed the country about him. He saw in the distance the spires and roofs of a village. He could see that the highway he had left led straight on through this village. He saw the sleighs of the farmers passing and repassing upon the highway, and he could hear their voices as they called to each other. But no vehicle or horse seemed to take the cross-road up which he had turned. If this neglect of the cross-road continued until nightfall all was well for him. And so at intervals he paused in his patient walk around the circle, and ascended the tree again, looking with great earnestness along the cross-road to see if it was still deserted. Some good fortune had befriended him on the highway through the night. He had encountered no human being

who could pry into his affairs, or carry intelligence of his strange appearance through the country. The same good fortune seemed to attend him still, for when, after weary hours of watching and waiting, the night came again, no vehicle or being of any description had left the highway and turned up the cross-road.

But with the shades of evening came something which alarmed the masked horseman. The air, which had become mild after the snow ceased to fall, was now fast becoming colder and colder as the darkness gathered. In the village houses not far away, a haze was settling upon the window-panes which soon became frost. The darkness came rapidly at last, and the glass of the windows became entirely white. The villagers shivered on their homeward walk, and rejoiced when the door was closed behind them, and the warm fire was before them. The belated farmers on the highway whipped up their horses, and sped away homeward. Colder and colder grew the night, and dark as Tartarus were the shadows which enveloped the earth. What had become of the solitary mask standing in his circle beside the steed and the inanimate bag? He was hardy, and accustomed to exposure to the elements. His frame was sinewy, and his skin tough. Nevertheless, he had suffered. Without food and without shelter all day, after a night of exposure and travel, he and his powerful steed had both become cold and weary. Would they be able to face the exposures of another night of travel. Something more stinging than the beat of the snow in their faces was before them now. The highway would be comparatively a broken road by this time, after all the sleighs had been traversing it through the day. But the freezing blast would confront them, aye! it was stinging them already with the fall of the night. Would it not be wise to relinquish the frozen, inanimate contents of the long bag? Thus relieved, the steed would probably carry his master safe through the night. The idea flashed upon the mind of the white mask, but he rejected it. There was evidently something in the bag too precious to be abandoned thus. It might be covered with

snow and thus remain undiscovered. Ah! the crafty, indefatigable will that had planned this extraordinary ride was not one to abandon a purpose while any possibility of success remained. He accordingly, in the darkness, raised the inanimate bag and, though his limbs were numbed by the cold, succeeded in throwing it again across the shoulders of the horse. Then he led the beast out from the circle and through the snow until they reached the junction of the cross-road and the highway. There he mounted the steed and put him at a gallop to warm his limbs. The road was well broken, and the horse started off with alacrity. At a steady pace he traversed hill and dale, and soon the lights of the village loomed up before them. Should they enter the main street and hazard a dash through the town, trusting to the coldness of the night to keep all spectators off from the streets? No one but the quick-witted and fearless white mask would have ventured upon so bold a course. But he knew that time was now precious to him, and he determined upon the feat. He made no change in the pace at which his steed was going, but held right on down the main street of the village. The cold had driven all within doors, and it seemed for a few moments as if he would pass through without being observed. But just as the steed came abreast of a large shed adjoining a tavern, some one under it in the darkness exclaimed "Great God! what is that?" and then ran out into the street to look again. The rider put spurs to his horse and they flew ahead like the wind. The strength and mettle of the beast was just being put to the test. He bounded ahead with the unusual weight bearing upon him, and in a few minutes the village lights were left far behind. Then the rider checked his steed and allowed him to walk. He seemed to fear no present pursuit, and was husbanding the strength of the faithful friend that bore him and his treasures. By this time the moon had arisen and the way was clearly marked out before them. Two apprehensions now beset the bold mask. Would the moonlight expose him to the gaze of any chance traveller on the road? Would his steed hold out under the double load? Meditating

upon these apprehensions he rode on at a brisker pace, and found, that though miles were being traversed, no vehicle or horse made its appearance upon the highway. The cold was too intense. No traveller would seek the road upon so fearful a night. And so the strange spectre of a white horse, and white rider, and white burden passed on unmolested and unseen. Brighter and more silvery grew the moon, and clearer came out all objects in its light. Higher and higher it mounted to the zenith, and more supernatural looked the white spectre in its light. With the regularity and firmness of destiny fell the beat of hoofs upon the snow, and with every fresh mile deepened the purpose of the mysterious rider to carry his burden in the bag to its goal. Where was he taking it? Up and down, up and down went the white bag with the motions of the steed, and erect and ghost-like sat the white mask behind it. On, and on, and on; would it never cease, that even, monotonous and unflagging bound of the white horse?

At last the rider halted at the summit of a great hill, and looked off over the vague panorama of woods, and valleys, and mountains that lay before him in the moonlight. The great hills on the west were dimly visible, but he knew them well. He knew now that he was near his journey's end. If he could pass down the long slope of the hill and traverse a mile of woods beyond without being met and interfered with, all would be well. But he had at the edge of the woods to pass through a small town. Could he accomplish this feat as well as he had the feat at the village so many miles now behind him? He looked at the moon; it was sinking in the west, and soon its light would be hidden. Now, or never he must make his desperate effort. He knew it would be dangerous to traverse that wood in utter darkness. His steed might be crippled in the pitfalls which were on either side of that dangerous forest road. With one encouraging word to his steed, he was moving again, and at break-neck speed. Down the hill-side they flew, and the inanimate treasure in the long bag kept them company. It rolled, and it jostled from side to side, but the rider put

his hand upon it to steady it. It gave back to his touch a cold, hard, frozen sensation. But he was too intent on speed now to analyze sensations, or to shudder at them. What cared he? Far down the long slope of the hill they sped, and then entered the village. A dog howled at them from a barn, a long, frantic howl. Did the brute scent something mysterious and cold passing by? He howled long, and savagely, until the spectre was far out of sight; and then went whining uneasy and troubled to his bed again. But the white mask cared nothing for dogs, so long as they impeded not his flight. He was traversing now the woods, and he looked uneasily on every side of him. It would never do to fail when so near the end of his journey; so he watched narrowly the road, and the inequalities of the snowy carpet covering the ground. All went well. His good fortune was still beside him. The forest road was fast widening out into a plain, snowy white, and lighted still by the setting moon. He crossed this plain, and ascended a rocky road overhung with scattering trees. Through their branches he espied a broad sheet of silver, rippling ever so faintly. He rode close to the bank of this wide and solemn river, and halted at a spot where the current flowed swiftly, some twenty feet below him. He dismounted and secured his horse. Then he relieved the beast of his frozen burden, and this time he relieved him of that burden forever. From that hour forward, the burden was to be exclusively his own. He bore it with tenacious hold, this man of iron; bore it close to the river brink, and with a mighty effort, heaved it out into the air. It fell with a great splash into the stream, and the silver ripples glistened over the spot where it disappeared. At this instant the moon went down, and steed and rider were enveloped in total darkness.

On the morning following the murder, the inmates of the manor-house awoke to find winter in full possession of the estate. The snow had fallen heavily, and it required hours to break the road leading to the highway. When this was effected, and towards the hour of noon, the police magistrate, who had

been notified of the troubles at the manor by the messenger, arrived. He was accompanied by two constables, and came jingling up to the door in a large sleigh. The two families were awaiting his arrival with no little anxiety. He came in amid great confusion, and the rushing of servants to get a peep at him. He was acquainted with the Delancy family, and saluted Miss Delancy cordially. Shortly after divesting himself of his out-door garments, and throwing off the glass of wine which was brought him by Marie's order to refresh himself after his long ride, he said :

"I should have come last night, but the messenger told me that the prisoner was safely guarded, and so I refrained from fighting the elements all night. You know I had to come twelve miles. But where is the prisoner? I hope, Miss Delancy, there is nothing in this charge against your father. Indeed so high does his character stand in the county that his cause will find many adherents. There is nothing so potent in times of trouble as a life-long good name. But show me the prisoner, and bring every one along who knows anything about the affair."

"My father is a gentleman and a Christian," replied the young lady, proudly. "He is incapable of crime. But I thank you, Mr. Hoag, for speaking well of him at such a fearful time."

"Not at all, not at all," replied the magistrate. "Arthur Delancy has always maintained a good name. He is entitled to the benefit of it."

"Come this way, sir," said Miss Delancy, leading the way to her father's room, followed by the entire household. They found the prisoner pacing up and down before his fire, and guarded by another sentry, who had relieved the first when morning came.

"Good-morning, sir," said Mr. Hoag, extending his hand to the prisoner; "I am sorry to see you in trouble."

Arthur Delancy took the magistrate's hand in silence. The kindness of Mr. Hoag's tones unnerved him, and he did not

trust his lips to speak. He held out a chair, however, to the speaker. Every one else seemed to have forgotten that courtesy. The officer of the law, attended by his two constables, then proceeded to interrogate all present as to the cry of murder and the attendant circumstances. Among the witnesses thus informally examined was Mrs. Jourdan Delancy. The old lady sat before the fire in an arm-chair, and gave in her evidence calmly and lucidly, her black eyes roving everywhere over the assembled people. To the following interrogatory she replied without hesitation or flinching :

"Have you the slightest suspicion or knowledge who the black mask was?"

"I have not."

CHAPTER VIII.

*"She goes, and leaves the woods forlorn;
For grief the birds refuse to sing;
Bare lie the fields that laughed with corn."*

Transition.

WHILE Mrs. Delancy was being interrogated as to her knowledge of the murder, her son was watching intently for her responses, and looking not at her but into the fire. When, however, she answered, "I have not," he looked up quickly into her face. She detected the rapid and searching glance he gave her, but gave no indication of comprehending the meaning of his look. If the old lady was *particeps criminis*, she certainly possessed wonderful control over her emotions. When her examination was finished, the crowd had no more light upon the murder than they had before. She had heard the black mask enter the library window, and had seen him look in at her door. He appeared to walk in felt or some other kind of noiseless shoes. She had heard the cry, "Help, help—murder!" This was all she could swear to. As the magistrate was evidently meditating upon dismissing

her, and taking up another witness, the mother of Hartwell bent over and whispered something in his ear. He nodded assent, and shortly after put this interrogatory:

"About how tall a man did the black mask appear to be, Mrs. Delancy? Is there any one in this room who appears to you to be about the same height as the man in the domino?"

"That is a difficult question to answer, sir," she said, looking about her. "Men appear so different when sitting from what they do when standing. I will propose this to you, sir. The doors on my floor above are exactly the same size as on this floor. Let all the men here go into the hall, and come to the hall door of this room one by one, and stand there for an instant, and I will tell you pretty near which one stands the same height in the door as the black mask stood."

Her proposition was accepted; and Mr. Hoag directed all the men present, including the two constables, to enter the room slowly from the hall, and one by one. Mrs. Delancy watched them closely as they entered, seeming to gauge them by some mark in her eye attached to the door-frame. Presently her son came to the door, paused a moment, and then walked in.

"How is that height of man compared with the height of the black mask?" inquired the magistrate.

"The mask, I should think, was just about that height," she replied, deliberately. Some of the people present shuddered, and a murmur ran around the room.

"Hush!" said the magistrate. "Here is a true and impartial witness. Silence! all of you. Let the rest of the men march in. How is that man now standing in the door, Mrs. Delancy? What do you say to him?"

"He is just about the same height as the mask," she replied.

"Now," said the magistrate to the man last entering, "you stand back to back with Mr. Arthur Delancy, and let us test the accuracy of Mrs. Delancy's eye."

The two men stood up together. Another murmur ran around the room. They were apparently of the same height.

"Very good eye for measurement you have, madame," said Mr. Hoag. "Now, what is your name, sir, and where do you live?" he continued, as he turned to the man who had stood back to back with Mr. Delancy.

"My name, sir, is Peter Gansevoort. I am one of Mr. Delancy's servants."

"And where were you when the cry of murder was raised?"

"Upstairs, sir."

"Where upstairs, and what were you doing?"

"In the front bedroom, sir—the one that has the red canopy over the bed. I was gathering up my tools, sir. I do the carpentering around the place; and some of them had been using my tools for one purpose and another in packing up the things."

"You were in that room, then, when you heard the cry of murder?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did you do, then?"

"I stood still, and listened."

"Didn't you run to help?"

"No, sir."

"Why not?"

"I was frightened, sir. For a moment, I didn't know what to do."

"And how long did you stand there, in the red-canopy bedroom?"

"About five minutes, sir."

"Well, what did you do next?"

"After I had listened about five minutes, and didn't hear anything more, except the people running through the hall to the back part, I came out and walked along the upper hall towards Mrs. Delancy's rooms."

"Well, what did you see or hear next?"

"Then I went into a bedroom next to Mrs. Delancy's library, and listened again."

"That is to say, you went into Mrs. Delancy's bedroom. They tell me that her bedroom adjoins her library."

"No, sir; I didn't go into her bedroom. Her bedroom is next to the library; but I went into another bedroom that is on the other side of the library."

"Very well. Now tell me what you heard there."

"I heard a fight going on. It sounded like men trampling back and forth right under me."

"What next?"

"Then I heard the library window raised up by somebody."

"Did you go to see who it was?"

"No, sir. I supposed it was Mrs. Delancy going to look out the window to see what the muss was."

"What did you do then?"

"Then I raised up my window and looked out. I could look right down to the window of Mr. Delancy's study."

"Was his window down?"

"Yes, sir. It was shut."

"Could you hear or see anything while you were looking out the window?"

"I couldn't see anything but the snow-storm beating against Mr. Delancy's window. But I heard something."

"What?"

"A woman scream out."

"Who do you think it was?"

"I reckoned it was Mrs. Delancy, because she lived on that floor."

"Did you go to help her?"

"I looked out into the hall, sir, and I saw a man all dressed in black, with a black mask, coming right down the hall towards me. He seemed to be coming from Mrs. Delancy's parlor. When he saw me he dodged into Mrs. Delancy's bedroom from the hall."

"What did you do?"

"I had a hatchet in my hand and I followed him. When I came to the door of her bedroom I found it was locked on the inside. Then I went into the library to see if I could get into the bedroom that way; but that door into her bedroom was locked."

"Was a window of the library up?"

"Yes, sir. But I was after the mask, and so I didn't shut it, but ran out into the hall and went to Mrs. Delancy's parlor door, to see if I couldn't get into her bedroom from that side. But her parlor door into the hall was locked too."

"What then?"

"Then I thought it was queer that her parlor and bedroom were both locked so that nobody could get into either of them, and a strange man in a black mask was surely in her bedroom at that time. So I went downstairs to tell Miss Delancy, and ask her if I shouldn't smash in the door where her grandmother was surely in trouble."

"And so you went downstairs and left the black mask in Mrs. Delancy's bedroom?"

"Yes, sir, I did; and by the time I could get to the front of the house, go downstairs, and walk around to the study where they all were, I didn't get no chance to speak to her. We all run up the back stairs with her to her grandmother's parlor, and there was the parlor door wide open and Mrs. Delancy standing by the mantel-piece."

"That will do for you, sir," said the magistrate. "You came pretty near having a crack with your hatchet at the murderer. That will do. Now, Mrs. Delancy, I would like to question you once more."

"Very well, sir," responded the old lady.

"After you saw the black mask and screamed out, what did you do?"

"The mask disappeared, and I shut the door at which he had looked in, and I locked it."

"Did any one try to get in after you locked it?"

"Yes, sir; some one tried the door knob, but I kept still

and didn't unlock it. After a while I unlocked it and looked out into the hall. There was nobody there, so I left it open."

"While you had that door locked, was the door between your parlor and bedroom shut?"

"I think it was, sir."

"That will do, Mrs. Delancy. But wait one moment. Did you ever see this dagger before?" He held up the blood-stained dagger which had been found in the snow under Arthur Delancy's window.

Some of the attentive eyes about the old lady fancied they saw a slight agitation in her manner, as the bloody token of crime was held up to her for examination.

She approached the steel, examined it carefully, and then said, "Yes! I have often seen it about this house. It has been in the family for several generations, I hear. I could not mistake it, for here are the Delancy arms upon the hilt."

"Who generally has had charge of it in this house?"

"I have, sir. It has generally been lying upon my dressing-table or mantel-piece. Sometimes I have used it for a paper knife."

"Where did you last see it?"

"On my dressing-table, a day or two ago."

"Can you not be more explicit as to when you saw it last?"

"No, sir," she said decidedly.

The magistrate then notified her that he would require no further answers from her. He proceeded then to examine all persons in the house who seemed to have heard or seen anything pertinent to the case. After all were interrogated and no new facts were elicited, he said:

"I deem it my duty, under the circumstances of this case, to arrest and commit to the county jail, Mr. Arthur Delancy, to await the action of the grand jury."

A murmur of approbation ran around the room.

"Hush!" he said. "I charge all the rest of you to make every effort in your power to discover the body of the mur-

dered man. If that body is not found no man can be convicted of murder."

There were manifestations of surprise at this announcement of the law. But Mr. Hoag said again :

"That is the law. Therefore see to it that you keep your eyes upon every suspicious trace. This body of Hartwell cannot be a great way off from the place where I am sitting."

Miss Delancy turned pale with apprehension when the magistrate announced that her father would be held to answer the charge of murder. She drew near to Arthur Delancy, and stood with her arm around his neck as he sat in the chair. He whispered something to her which seemed to reassure her, for she stood erect again, and her face resumed its usual color. But Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, when Mr. Hoag announced that all efforts to convict of murder would fail, if the body of Hartwell was not produced, gave her son an exultant look. Several persons noticed her expression of satisfaction, particularly the mother of the missing man, and they all felt their suspicions of the old lady's complicity with the crime deepen. But all listened eagerly as Mrs. Delancy bent slightly forward and said to the magistrate :

"You seem, sir, to be well versed in the law. Therefore, if you will permit me, I would like to ask you a legal question connected peculiarly with my granddaughter and myself at this present hour. If it is advice for which you are as a lawyer entitled to a fee, I will see that you are paid for advising us."

"I generally, madame, am paid for giving my legal opinion to clients," said Mr. Hoag. "But if it is only a question which concerns you and Miss Delancy, ask it, and I will endeavor to answer it without money and without price."

"Thank you, sir," she said, bowing graciously. "This is the question. Mr. Hartwell was just about to take possession of this house and manor as a tenant for life. The instant of his death, as I understand it, that tenancy expires, and the property reverts to the Delancy family again. Am I right?"

"You are, madame. The moment the tenant for life is dead, his right to an estate expires."

A murmur now ran round the room, and Mrs. Hartwell was heard to exclaim:

"That cannot be just. First murder my son, and then be allowed to take the property which he had obtained possession of to pay old Delancy's debts to him."

"My husband never owed your son any money!" exclaimed Mrs. Delancy fiercely across the room.

"Indeed he did," retorted Mrs. Hartwell.

"Bring forward your evidences of these debts, and I will make my kinsmen pay them. There is a challenge for you. You can never respond to it, for no such evidences of debt exist. You will never produce them, mark my words. They don't exist, and never did," said Mrs. Delancy, raising her voice.

"Hush!" said the magistrate. "These discussions are not proper now. But, Mrs. Delancy, I will explain to you further regarding the question you have put to me. If it were positively known that Mr. Hartwell was dead, you and your granddaughter could remain in this house. If the body of Hartwell could be brought into this room now, I would protect you and your granddaughter in the possession of this manor, and see that every one left it who was disagreeable to you. But the law does not recognize that the tenant for life is dead, until for a certain number of years he fails to put in his appearance. Therefore, if his dead body is not found, you and your granddaughter will have to yield up the possession of the manor to Mr. Hartwell's family until that certain number of years has expired."

Mrs. Delancy looked crestfallen, and Mrs. Hartwell triumphant. But Arthur Delancy, who had been listening attentively, exclaimed:

"Can that be the law, sir?"

"It is," said Mr. Hoag, decidedly. "The same uncertainty regarding the death of the lost Hartwell, which will defeat all

efforts to convict of murder if the body is not found, will justify and protect the Hartwell family in possession of this manor, until the expiration of the seven years, when the law presumes that he is dead, by his failure to appear."

"They have overshot their mark," whispered one of the Hartwell servants to another. "Look at the old lady now! Look at Arthur Delancy! If they produce the body, one or both of them will be hung. If they don't let the body be found, they will have to walk out of the manor-house for years. Just look at the old lady."

The venerable personage who was attracting their attention at this moment was sitting with her hands clasped in her lap, and looking at the carpet at her feet. She was deadly pale. The concluding part of Mr. Hoag's sentence had seemed to dissipate the firmness and confidence in which she had been acting her part. All was lost then, and despite the murder, she and her grandchild were going forth into the world beggars, and her son was going to prison. The disappearance of the corpse of Hartwell, its effectual concealment, was then the real point upon which her beggary turned. But if the body should turn up to the eyes of men, what then? Then she could enter with her grandchild into the enjoyment and possession of her home, the grand, the rich, the beautiful manor. But if the body reappeared, what further consequences would be entailed? Some one might be convicted of murder. Who? Her son had been found locked in the same suite of rooms with the voice which cried "help, help—murder!" The dagger which had done the deed was one that had usually been in her possession. The black mask, when last seen, had been seen to enter her bedroom and lock himself in. How would all these circumstances look in a court of justice if the body should reappear? But she gave no indication, other than her silence and paleness, that she was propounding these questions to herself. She knew that curious eyes were watching her. She continued to look down; but seeing from the confusion about her that the examination was closed, and that Arthur Delancy's

friends were gathering about him to give him a shake of the hand and a farewell before he was led away to prison, she recovered her animation, and approaching the prisoner, took his head into her venerable arms, and said, tenderly :

"This parting will be of short duration, my dear son. God will clear you as He does all who are innocent and trust in Him. I know you are incapable of crime. I will take care of Marie." Then turning to the magistrate, who was about to take his departure, after instructing the constables what to do with the prisoner, she said, "I suppose there will be no difficulty in our visiting Mr. Delancy during his confinement."

"Not at all," was the response. "You will be searched upon your entry into the prison, to be sure that you carry the prisoner no files or other means of escaping. But otherwise, you and his daughter can have access to him upon application to me. Good-day, madame ; I hope you will have a speedy escape from all your troubles. Good-day, Miss Delancy. Good-day all."

He went out, followed by most of the party, but a few remained to assist Mr. Delancy and provide for his immediate wants. His daughter, full of agony, but under great self-control, brought his greatcoat and gloves, hat, and muffler, and prepared him for the encounter with the winter weather, and for his long ride to the jail. The prisoner seemed to be very calm, and his principal anxiety was for his daughter and mother. But they assured him that in their little home to which they were going, and past which he would ride with his guard, they could manage to get along until he was released. The parting was affecting, but the three were of that heroic stamp that can face adversity and grow strong under it. The servants, who were really attached to the family, gathered about Mr. Delancy as he was marched out and along the great hall where so many of his race had moved in honor. Some wept, some cursed at the spectacle, so enraged were they at the humiliating sight. But the gardener, who had made himself so conspicuous in the early stages of the excitement, was remarkably quiet on this

occasion, and seemed to keep out of the way of his late master. He hung back, and nearly escaped the observation of Mr. Delancy as he stood upon the front gallery of the house awaiting the coming of the sleigh in which his captors were to take him away. But as the gray-haired gentleman turned to take a farewell look at the hall of his ancestors, he espied the gardener far back in the shadows, and called to him :

"Come here, Dabney."

The man came forward in surprise, and took the hand his late master extended to him.

"Won't you shake your old master by the hand as he is going off to prison?"

The words came out so kindly and touchingly that the man was moved.

"I have never been unjust to you, Dabney, have I? A little peremptory sometimes, but never unjust, have I?"

"No, Mr. Delancy," said the gardener, "you have been a kind master and a just one. No place like this manor can go on right without a clear head and a firm one. You have said some things that made me mad, when you were riled up. But I will say that you never defrauded man, woman, or child upon this manor. I shake your hand, sir, with all my heart, and may God clear you of all this dreadful business. Now that I have been thinking it over all night, I don't believe you did it. You get awful mad sometimes, but then you wouldn't murder. I thought for a while, when you were rampaging up and down the house yesterday, and looking so tearing mad, that you were ready to butcher a whole village for taking away your home from you. But I just think now you was acting like I would under the same provocation, and God knows I wouldn't kill anybody."

"That's right, Dabney," exclaimed the impetuous Delancy, giving the gardener a hearty shake of the hand; "you're all right now." Then turning to his guards, who were leading him down the steps to the sleigh, he said to them gayly, but in his quick, nervous way :

"There, my fine fellows, you see I'm coming out all right at last. Don't you see that even my enemies on the manor become my friends when the pinch comes? That fellow now has been mad with me a week because I contradicted him about his theory of heat in my hot-house. I was right, too, Dabney," he said to the gardener, who came to the sleigh and tucked in the buffalo robes.

"Stiff to your opinion to the last," replied Dabney. "But good-by, Mr. Delancy; luck go with you."

And thus the proud gentleman drove away from his estates beggared, at least for a time, and guarded by officers of the law, that he might not take a felon's risk and run for his life.

The Hartwell family were gathered at the windows looking out upon the exit of those whom they had displaced, for just behind Mr. Delancy drove off the sleigh which contained Mrs. Jourdan Delancy and her granddaughter. Rapidly flew the sleighs down the avenue of elms. They crossed the bridge and glided on over the estate. Marie's eyes were filled with tears. She turned and looked back at the old manor-house, her childhood's home. Every association of tenderness she had ever known was with that old house of her ancestors. She knew every tree, and knoll, and rock upon the place. She was leaving behind her, too, her favorite horse, which she almost idolized. She was now too poor to take him with her. But Tasso, the fox-hound, was crouching upon the buffalo robe over her feet. Poor, beautiful Tasso. He would follow her to her grave. Faster and faster now sped on the sleighs. Faster and faster receded the snow-crowned manor-house in the distance. They ascended a hill crowned by a cluster of young pines. It was the last view they could have of the old home. "Stop, driver," said Marie. Grandmother and child turned and took the last look. The sun was shining upon the old home. They looked eagerly, fondly upon the old shrine of the heart. It still looked majestic and beautiful, though far away. They could see people moving upon the gallery where so often they had looked forth upon the varied beauties of the great estate


in its spring, summer, and autumn garb, and where the loved and the lost had once smiled upon them. There had they reigned in honor. They were leaving it now exiles. One more eager, tearful gaze, and Marie sank into her grandmother's arms, gasping out : " Drive on now ; I can look at it no longer." A turn of the road under the pines and the manor-house vanished. They saw it no more. They glided on in the sunlight towards the manor gate with heavy hearts, Marie in agony, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy furious and revengeful. Both were silent. On, on moved both sleighs towards the porter's lodge. The last sleigh, from the halt on the hill, had fallen considerably behind. Arthur Delancy had not turned to wave a farewell to his old home, his birthplace, his pride. He was struggling to control himself, and dared not look back. As the two sleighs approached the gate, they detected the old porter, who had done duty on the spot for three generations of the Delancy family, standing bareheaded in his door, hat in hand. Many persons of both sexes appeared to be collected within and without the gate. As Arthur Delancy's sleigh paused for the gate to be opened, the old man, as he walked back with it grasped in his aged hand, said : " God bless you, Arthur Delancy, you're an honest man, and a true gentleman. You will come out all right. They never hang such men as your stock. Good-by, sir ; good-by."

Delancy kissed his hand to the old porter, and took off his hat to the crowd of tenants outside. They gave him three cheers, and called out warmly after him as the sleigh sped on. When the second sleigh came up to the gate, and the tenants saw the lovely face of the girl who was to have been the heiress of the estate after her father's decease, tears came into the eyes of some of the women, and the men shouted, " Good-by ! Miss Delancy ; some of us will live to see you back again. God bless you. We're going to hunt this whole manor over to find Hartwell's body, so you can return right away. Wish us success. Good-by to you, and good-by to Jourdan Delancy's widow. God bring her back too."

"Arthur is an innocent man," said the old lady leaning forward to shake hands with a venerable farmer who had large interests on the manor, and who hastened up to the side of the sleigh as it paused at the open gate, that the two ladies might bid the neighbors and tenants farewell. "We believe it, madame," he said warmly, "and we only hope they will summon the jury from the Delancy Manor."

CHAPTER IX.

"I have lived to know that the great secret of human happiness is this: Never suffer your energies to stagnate. The old adage of 'too many irons in the fire' conveys an abominable lie. You cannot have too many; poker, tongs and all: keep them going."—Dr. E. D. Clarke.

ACGREGOR sat alone in a simply furnished room in the metropolis, preparing the leading editorial for the next day's paper. He had been ill. He was not sufficiently restored to health to enable him to go to the editorial rooms of his paper. So he wrote at his lodgings, and a boy came regularly for his manuscript. He looked very weary and care-worn; and when the pen was laid down at the close of the article, with a sigh of relief, he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. He was in pain, and its location was in that part of the head where so many literary men, when overtaxing their powers, suffer, viz., the back of the skull where the spinal cord meets the brain. He sat for a few moments with his eyes closed. Then, as if impelled by a sudden consciousness of his responsible position on the editorial staff, he started up and turned again to his table. The great duty was accomplished. The editorial for the morrow was ready, and it was a masterly production. It was the result of great and patient research. He had overhauled all the Congressional statistics on the subject, and consulted freely with

practical business men. In the maturity of his study and the light afforded him by the ablest of the exchanges of the newspaper office, he had determined upon a bold and suggestive leader which should be the advance one of a series of editorials intended to influence his political party on the subject of a tariff for protection. An able statesman, whose mental attributes were of an elevated order and of a wide range, and whose voice was potent in all political councils of the party, had read and approved of the greater part of this editorial. And now the weary and gifted *littérateur* was about to launch his production upon the waves of public opinion. He contemplated, with no trifling measure of anxiety, the effect it would produce upon the commercial public.

But other duties were awaiting the attention of the journalist. A pile of letters was upon his table which must be read and disposed of that day; for the morrow would bring another instalment of epistles, and these things must not be allowed to accumulate by the methodical man of business. So he turned his chair towards the fire of the grate, and in the warmth of the burning and scarlet coals, opened and read his letters, and then laid them one by one upon his desk as they required an answer, or tossed them into his waste-basket under the table if they were trivial, or impertinent to his business. All were disposed of at last, and he had turned to his table, and written all the answers, and piled them together, where the office boy could find them when he came for the editorial. He was congratulating himself upon the half-hour of leisure he would now have to rest his head before the fire in his chair, when his eye chanced to discover the corner of a letter which had slipped under some of his papers and been neglected. He drew it out, and shoved his chair once more up to the fire. Seating himself, he said: "I believe these letters worry and give me more pain in my head than my long editorials. Will people never cease writing to editors. Ah! what is this? A lady signs it, and such a bold, fine hand it is. There is character in that hand."

In another minute the editor had scanned the contents of

the note which accompanied a manuscript contribution for his paper, the leaves of which were tied with a dark-blue ribbon. It read thus :

“MR. MACGREGOR—DEAR SIR : It will not require the discrimination of a Theophrastus to discover that the enclosed manuscript is the work of a tyro in literature. But proficiency in anything is only acquired by labor and experience, and I must begin somewhere. So I take the liberty of enclosing my manuscript for your inspection. My poverty, and the dependence of others upon me, force me to write for money. If you deem the story worthy of a place in your columns, pay me for it, and address ‘Nora,’ Box 726, New York Post Office.”

“Poor women, poor women,” said the journalist retaining the note in his hand after he had read it, and not flinging it into the waste-basket as was his custom with all contributions from unknown people. “They fight hard for a living when they are impoverished, and the first thing an educated woman flies to for a support is literature. And here is another unfortunate, educated and intelligent, begging at the gates of literature. What can I, what shall I do with all these women? Our literary space is only one page of the paper, and for it there is a constant run of applications. What does this woman want me to publish now? I will glance at it any way. Oh! my head, my head! Would to God that I could lay it now in some loving woman’s lap and have her by the magnetism of her love and tenderness soothe me to sleep.”

He arose from the chair and paced the room, the acute pain in his brain, and the recollection that he was alone in the world, unloved and uncared for, appearing to drive him nearly frantic. He went to the window at last and looked out. He longed for the fresh air of the streets. He had been shut up between four walls so many weeks that even a glimpse into the open air was a relief. But then, the recollection that a journalist has no leisure out of the regular intervals of rest returned to him, and

he went back to his table, took up the lady's manuscript, and with his forehead resting upon his left palm, commenced painfully to read it. After a few sentences he became interested and was soon wholly absorbed, the pain in his head seeming to lull itself away in the mystery of the story. It ran thus :

"THE LOST WILL."

BY NORA.

In the year 18—2 I purchased a burglar-proof safe. The success which had attended my practice of the law for several years had accumulated on my hands a pile of legal documents and coupon bonds, which prudence suggested should be committed to the custody of a strong-box. I selected an iron safe suitable for the protection of valuable papers, which, in addition to its being fire-proof, possessed a concealed keyhole to accelerate the development of burglars' brains. The manufacturer, who has gained a world-wide celebrity, assured me that no human being could discover the keyhole unless he was informed of the combination of numbers, which I alone knew. The arrangement was such that I could select in my own mind several consecutive figures, and adjust the brass over the keyhole accordingly, so that it would respond and move aside when my figures were brought into a line, and not otherwise. The numeral figures on the brass over the concealed keyhole might be moved by a stranger into a thousand different combinations, and still the brass would not uncover the keyhole, and the inviolability of my safe would remain perfect. If I chose to reveal the talismanic numerals to any friend, well and good. He would then share my secret of the keyhole. If, on the other hand, I preferred perfect isolation in my secret, I had only to keep my lips closed.

There was a pleasurable consciousness of power in the reflection that I alone of all the millions of my countrymen could gain access to my private property in the safe. The stronghold could not be entered without my connivance. It was too pon-

derous to be removed by the united strength of a dozen thieves for the purpose of being battered to pieces. Aye! more; in the event of my forgetting the magic combination of numbers on the brass, I could not break it open, but it would have to be returned to the manufacturer to be crushed open by powerful machinery. I had selected a place for the safe in my bedroom on the ground floor of the private dwelling, where I was allowed, in consideration of my quiet habits, and my bachelorhood, to pay rent for two rooms. The family who occupied the remainder of the house never interfered with my movements. I took my meals at a restaurant, and was allowed the privilege of a night-key to the hall which separated me from the other occupants of the private residence. My apartments were regulated by the house-maid during my absence at my law-office, and no other person was permitted to enter my rooms. From the hall of the house I gained admittance to my sitting-room or private parlor by a door which had a strong bolt inside. This bolt I always attended to carefully at night. When I was sufficiently wearied from my studies in the private parlor, I could pass into the bed-room, where my wonderful safe stood, through a door which also possessed an iron bolt. This latter fastening was methodically attended to by me upon retiring. If any burglar obtained access to my sleeping apartment at night he would have to burst open the bolted door, or break through the single window which was bolted at the junction of the sashes, and was fortified also with an apparatus called "a Burglar's Alarm," which raised a startling din whenever the sash was even gently moved at night.

Here, in my fortified bedroom, I was bolted in at night, with my tall, solitary iron companion standing sentry over my sleep. I learned at length to cherish a species of affection for the grim, stern mass of steel and iron which guarded my valuables and my professional secrets so faithfully, and which every morning offered to my inquiring gaze palpable evidence of its impenetrable fidelity to its trust during my unconscious hours. The key of the safe was deposited every night, upon retiring, be-

neath my pillow, in company with my revolver. Often have I waked from my slumber at midnight and seen the moonbeams streaming in through my window panes upon the iron custodian of my treasures and flashing from its brass-plate ornaments. Then would I turn over with renewed feelings of assurance to sleep again.

The office where I transacted business with my clients was at least a mile distant from my lodgings. In the morning I unlocked my safe, took out such papers as I should need during my office hours, and putting them in a green-silk bag with the safe key, marched along the streets of the town towards my office. There would the green bag and key remain until I was ready to leave my place of business for the night. Then, clearing my office table of all really valuable papers, I would place them in the bag with the key and return them to the custody of the safe for the night upon my return to my lodgings. My habits were unusually methodical, and I have the assurance to assert that I never made mistakes. My friends have often expressed regret that they did not profess my methodical manner of transacting business, and my remarkable memory, which enabled me always to place my finger upon a paper or document when it was wanted. I have specified thus minutely the location of my rooms, the impenetrability of my doors and windows at night, and my careful method in transacting business, that the reader may share the surprise and chagrin which I experienced on a certain memorable occasion, when I discovered that there are laws of intellectual action which sometimes bid defiance to the conscientious and methodical man of business, and render the brass safe key in his hand, or under his pillow, of no more real value than a feather.

I desire that no lip shall curl in contempt, and no hasty epithet of scorn be launched at me when my pen traces the word which has so often perplexed thinking men of this century—*Spiritualism*. Hear me. As an earnest, professional man, intent upon the practical business and affairs of life, I have opposed myself on every favorable opportunity to the theory of

Spiritualism. I oppose it now, and shall pursue my allotted path of life uninfluenced and unbiased by its manifestations. Nevertheless do I assert, after the lapse of years, and in the coolness of experience, that Spiritualism occasioned me great trouble of mind, caused the loss of a document which I believed to be absolutely protected by the *Ægis* of my brass safe key, and nearly plunged into irretrievable ruin one of the sweetest and most valuable characters in maidenhood that Heaven ever sent to cheer the pathway of man's existence.

A few weeks after the purchase of my safe, and at least two hours before the sun went down to his western couch, I was seated in my law office, busily engaged in writing. The office table was covered with half a dozen legal papers, neatly folded and tied with red tape, two or three letters from clients, a few loose sheets of foolscap paper, a scrap of blotting paper, an inkstand, and two pens. I had completed my legal labors, and was occupied in writing to my absent brother in St. Louis. My table had no drawer, and among the papers tied with red tape appeared the everlasting green bag containing my safe key. The only other articles of furniture in the room were the mate of the cane-bottomed chair upon which I was seated and four open book-shelves filled with law books. I finished my letter, and was looking in vain over the table for an envelope, when the door opened, and my friend, Erastus Brownell, made his appearance.

"How are you, Charley, my old fellow?" said he, advancing and extending his hand.

I warmly greeted him, and bade him be seated; then turned to the table and folded the letter, intending to carry it in my bag to my lodgings, where I was sure of finding envelopes and postage stamps. Having completed the folding of the letter and laid it before me on the table, I turned again to my friend for a sociable chat. He had drawn the remaining chair up to the table, and so close to me that when I whirled around to him my knees came in contact with his. He laid his hand affectionately upon my knee, and said:

"Always busy, I see ; are you at leisure now to attend to a little affair of mine ?"

Upon receiving my assurance that I was at leisure for the remainder of the day, he leaned confidentially forward, and said :

"You and I, Charley, have always been friends, and I want to intrust a paper to your keeping in case I should die before you."

He thrust his hand into the side pocket of his coat and drew forth a document or folded paper, inclosed in a brown envelope. When my letter should be deposited in an envelope it would make about the same sized package. He handed the paper to me, and called my attention to the handwriting upon one end of the envelope. I read it thus :

"The last will of Erastus Brownell, intrusted to his friend, Charles Seymour, for safe-keeping."

After quizzing him about his age, and the advantage he had over me in the number of his gray hairs, I informed him of my wonderful safe. I told him that his paper should find lodgment in it that very night. He said, "Very well ;" and I thereupon laid his will on my table, and entered into a prolonged discussion upon matters connected with the elevation to a judicial office of a mutual friend, who had been a school-mate of both of us. The conversation gradually turned upon a spiritual *séance* which our friend had attended. My companion, to my surprise, avowed himself to be a believer. I looked at him as if believing him to be jesting. He stated that he had long been incredulous, but that finally the evidences had accumulated upon him with such overpowering force that he was compelled to accept the spiritual theory. I rallied him upon a little incident in his life, which had given some persons occasion to assert that he was "always a little cracked." He flushed up with anger, and immediately commenced a hot defence of his new views. I as stoutly withstood him. We

contended long and with much spirit, neither being willing to admit defeat in any particular. Finally, my friend said, smilingly, "Well, Charley, don't let us quarrel forever about the matter. It's perfectly evident that you won't yield a hair until the facts come under your own personal observation."

"No danger of that occurring," said I; "that is exactly what I never can be gratified with—seeing for myself—they won't perform when I'm around."

"You *will* see for yourself, some day; mark my words. I declare to you, Charley Seymour, that if I die before you do, and it is permitted to me by our common God and Father to return to earth, I will give you such evidence of its being my spirit, that you will be startled. Just please remember that—good-by."

He was making for the door as he spoke, and I was following him, and expressing my dissent by shaking my head. I held open the door for him, and gave his outstretched hand a farewell grasp. He remarked, "It is almost dark; we have had a great argument. Good by; we will renew it some day; good-by."

He passed down the stairs, and I was left alone. I closed the door, and for a few moments paced up and down the room, wondering at my friend's credulity. Then, taking my hat from its nail on the wall, and placing it on my head, I approached my table and transferred my documents to my green bag. I then passed out of the room, locking the door behind me. Walking slowly and thoughtfully along the street, carrying my green bag, I noticed that the shades of evening would barely permit of my reaching my lodgings before they enveloped the streets of the town. Not deeming it advisable to be in that particular neighborhood, with the valuable contents of my bag, after dark, I quickened my pace. I succeeded in reaching my apartments in time to deposit the contents of my bag in my safe without the necessity of lighting my lamp. I made the magic combination of the figures over the keyhole, pushed aside the brass slide, pressed in the key, and the heavy door

was opened, exposing a vacant shelf, where I deposited the contents of my bag, and then closing the safe, put the key in my pocket and hurried across the street to the restaurant where I was accustomed to take my supper. Seating myself at the table, which, from long use, I had learned to call "my table," I ordered my evening meal. I had nearly finished my supper, when the proprietor of the restaurant, who was a cheerful, kind-hearted man, and always disposed to enter into conversation with his guests, approached me, and said :

"Have you heard of the sad affair which just happened in Beaver street, around the corner?"

"No, indeed," said I, "what is that?"

"Mr. Brownell has just dropped dead in the street, with disease of the heart, they say."

"What Brownell?" ejaculated I, pausing in the midst of my draught of tea, and looking up.

"Mr. Erastus Brownell, they call him; I don't know the gentleman—are you acquainted with him?"

"Acquainted with him? I should think I was—the best friend I have in this world," exclaimed I, seizing my hat and darting out into the street. Shocked and breathless, I reached Beaver street, and found a crowd of people collected on the corner discussing the affair. Gathering from the conflicting statements of the people sufficient information to enable me to follow the route the corpse had been borne away, I hurried on down the street, and succeeded in reaching my friend's mansion at the very moment his lifeless form was placed on the floor of the hall. Alas! the companion of my youth, the unflinching friend of my mature years, had gone to his last account, without one warning note for preparation. I remained with the agonized family for several hours, aiding them by every means in my power, and then took my departure, promising to return on the morrow, to render them further assistance. Upon reaching my lodgings, I bolted my doors, and retired for the night. Placing the key of my safe as usual under my pillow, I said aloud :

"Well, faithful key, you have performed the last service my friend asked of me in life ; you have locked up his will for his beloved children."

Lonely and desolate, I fell asleep ; my dreams were troubled. Everything that I possessed in life appeared to be wrenched away from me. Friends, relatives, property, reputation, all passed from me, and I was left alone with my pride, my only treasure, my peerless safe key. I brandished that over the demons who assailed me, and they could not force it from my hand. The inviolability of my safe was insured, even amid the flames of hell. "Eternal Salamander," I shouted, "you are my pride, my joy, my all ; I defy all the banded powers of darkness to expose your secrets. Fiends, weary me out, trample me down, wrench this key from me, and yet you will never find the keyhole till you can discover in the atoms of my brain the mysterious combination of numerals which alone is the true key of my safe."

The flaming demons of my sleep passed away, and a languor overcame me, gradually melting away into unconsciousness. Before my senses had been utterly lost in this new phase of my dream, the spirit of my friend glided past, and with a smile whispered to me, "You shall see, beloved Charley, that spirits have power to return to earth. With bloodless fingers I shall open your safe, and take away my will, for I hold the mystic key of the spirit land."

I awoke. The sunbeams flooded my room. The illusions of night vanished with the day, and I arose and prepared for my duties. But ever and anon the memory of my dream returned, and though my reason argued in derisive terms, I could not rest satisfied until my hands had flung open the ponderous door of the safe and I had looked in. Ill-omened star of the superstitious ! *The will was gone.*

I will confess that I experienced the temporary weakness of a shudder. A cold, nervous chill ran over me. I surely could be pardoned for that, fresh from the vivid images of my dream as I was. The superstitious weakness was no-

mentary, and I stood erect again with my armor of god-like reason girt about me. "No!" said I firmly, "hands of flesh and blood alone have stolen the will."

I walked to my window. It was securely bolted. I unbolted it, and attempted to raise the sash. The din of the "burglar's alarm" convinced me of the folly of attempting to trace the ingress of the thief at that point. I then examined the bolt of my door. It held that entrance with a giant's resistance. There was no chimney in the bedroom. It was as clear as an axiom that no human being could have entered that apartment after I had retired to my bed. Then my mind reasoned thus :

"It is possible that, inasmuch as I did not examine each paper as I placed it in the safe, the will might have escaped my notice, and be still remaining in the green bag. Instantly I recollected that I had turned the bag inside out. And there lay the bag upon the floor, close by the door, and turned inside out, just as I had left it.

"Ha!" said I in derision, "the idea of a man of my careful habits leaving anything in that bag over night." But might not the will have escaped my notice on the table of my office when I cleared off my papers and filled the bag? My knowledge of my regular and careful habits induced the answer, "No."

"But," said reason, "in that office on your table, or between that table and your safe-door, must the lost papers be looked for, unless, indeed, you may have placed it in your safe in a different compartment from that in which the other papers of the bag were deposited."

Could this last suggestion afford any clue? I sat on the floor, and with the entire contents of my safe piled up on the carpet around me, I examined every paper. I opened everything that was tied up, and minutely scanned every document in my safe. Everything that bore the mark of a pen, and which had been on my office table the evening before, was found in the safe, excepting only the will. There was the letter to my brother waiting for its envelope and stamp. There

was every client's letter which had been on my table the day before. There was also every legal paper, tied with red tape, which had been on my office table. Where was the will? Unquestionably on my office table, or lost between that table and my safe, or it had been unwarrantably removed from my safe—my stronghold, of which I alone could find the keyhole; my costly strong-box, to which no access could have been obtained after the contents of the bag were placed in it, unless some one had entered my room during my absence at the restaurant, and at the house of my deceased friend, and without my key, and without my knowledge as to the mystic combination, had opened it. This last supposition involved the following improbabilities. The intruder must have possessed a key exactly like mine. He must have guessed correctly the numerical combination in my mind, and which I had made up without the knowledge even of the manufacturer. He must have chosen the will alone, when valuable bonds and money were visible upon opening the safe-door. He must have obtained secret access to the hall of the house, or have been a member of the family. I felt that I could swallow all these improbabilities rather than admit spiritual interposition.

"But," said I to myself, "as a practical man of the world, do I believe in all these improbabilities? Do I believe that any man guessed my combination—knew of the will—came for it alone and guessed his way into my safe, into a safe which thousands of banks and mercantile houses trust implicitly for the preservation of their valuables? Reason answered, "No, such a belief would not be well founded." What then shall I do? Where shall I turn to seek for the lost document? Reason said again, "Go to your office; take with you the green bag, and its contents of last night; seat yourself exactly as you were when the will passed into your possession; distribute your papers on the table as they were when you received the will. Then recall slowly and carefully every incident that occurred from the moment of receiving your friend's trust, until you found the will was gone. If this process does

not aid you, prepare yourself for home. Take down your hat, put it on, clear the contents of your table into your bag, and minutely go through every process, every action of yesterday, until you reach the safe and have put everything away and locked the door. If you find no clue after patient and careful study of this nature, then conclude that reason alone cannot account for everything. If the will was not lost in your office, escaped not from your strong bag on your way home, was not lost between the opening of the bag and the packing away of the papers in the safe, then either some one secured a copy of your key, and guessed the combination in your brain, or the devil has spirited away the will. Probe all the laws and principles of human before you attempt the investigation of supernatural action."

CHAPTER X.

"Facts like these, with which the world is filled, embarrass strong minds more than they are willing to acknowledge."—Bayle.

"THE LOST WILL."

BY NORA.—PART SECOND.

FOLLOWING these promptings of my reason, I carefully replaced the papers in the bag, and, locking my safe, went off to my office. On the way I examined the bag. There was no hole in it, save the opening at the top, which I always drew tightly together, and tied with the green ribbon run through it. It had allowed nothing to escape, that was certain; and I had not paused anywhere between my office and the safe when carrying it. I reached my office and unlocked the door; there was no will on the table—no will on the floor, the chairs, or the book-shelves. There was nothing on my table but pen, ink, and blank paper, and the fragment of blotting-paper. Where, in the name of human providence,

care, method, common sense, was the will which my friend had so sacredly intrusted to me in the name of friendship? Had I ever misplaced a paper through abstraction of mind; laid away a document in the wrong place? Never! In the whole course of my legal career, I was never conscious of such an act of carelessness. Promptitude in the despatch of business had always been my pride, and to secure this result I had learned to practise method, and never allowed pleasure to interpose for an instant until the matter in hand was attended to and the burden and responsibility of thinking about it was removed from my mind. When my friend handed me his will I placed it on the table at my right hand, probably not twelve inches distant from the letter to my brother. When I swept with my hand the contents of the table, law papers, letters of correspondents, and the letter to my brother, into the green bag, was there any probability that the will was not swept into the bag too? I *know* that I looked over the table to see if anything was left that should enter the bag, and there was nothing left, save the few flat sheets of paper, the pens and ink, and the blotting-paper, and there they all were now. I did not identify the will when it entered the bag—nor did I identify the letter to my brother, nor the legal papers, and yet there they all were; and so, also, were the letters of my clients. I would be willing to swear in a court of justice that the manuscript contents of my table were placed in the bag, and were soon afterwards transferred to my safe; that not one single fragment of paper upon which there was any writing was overlooked and left upon my table. What was the only possible conclusion then? My safe had been opened and the will was unwarrantably removed. Had I been liable to make mistakes, I would have supposed, imagined, been willing to admit that I had done wonderful things to dispossess myself of the will; but, knowing my habits so well, I would be willing to take a solemn oath that I did not dispossess myself of the will; that there was no trap-door in the table for the will to fall into; that no rat, cat, dog, or mischievous child stole in through the door and removed the

will while I was talking with my friend. The only loop-hole for escape from the theory of spiritual interference with the document, was the possibility that some one had *guessed* the numerical combination over the keyhole, and, during my absence of the evening before, opened the safe, by happening to possess the exact copy of my brass key. The ownership of two hundred thousand dollars was to be regulated, then, by that shrewd *guess* of the unknown. This conclusion required belief in the following propositions :

First.—Some one had a motive for obtaining possession of the will, and knew or believed there was a will. *Second.*—Some one obtained an exact copy of my key. *Third.*—Some one guessed the numerical combination which exposed the keyhole. *Fourth.*—Some one obtained access to a house, the hall of which was protected by a lock day and night. Some member of an excellent family must be suspected, or some intruder on the premises. The combined suppositions, I confess, staggered me. So I returned to the consideration of the possibility of the document having been lost at my office. Disposing of the contents of my bag, as nearly as I was able, so as to assume my relative position of the day before, I sat down beside my table, and endeavored to live over again the interview with my friend, and my subsequent removal of the papers to my bag. I folded a paper to resemble a will, enclosing it in an envelope at the proper time, laid it on my table, and turned to converse with my friend. I endeavored to carry on the conversation precisely as it had occurred. While in the heat of the argument, *pro* and *con*, concerning Spiritualism, I was interrupted by a gentle rap at the door. I paused in surprise, for the hour was very early for business transactions. In response to my invitation to come in the door was timidly opened, and a young lady entered the office.

If there was ever a girl whom I esteemed and admired, it was Florence Brownell, the only daughter of my deceased friend. Of that queenly beauty and refinement which only comes of a long line of educated and refined ancestry, she possessed, at eighteen

years of age, an intellect, developed under careful tuition, well calculated to render her interesting to men who value something more than frivolity and nonsense in women. She could entertain the child or the *savant* by her wit, her accomplishments, and her learning. She was very gifted intellectually, but without ostentation, and she was as pure, and innocent, and natural as a child. Since the death of her mother, the responsibilities and cares of her father's household had devolved upon her, and right nobly and promptly did she respond to this new demand upon her capacities. Unfortunately, her only brother, Henry, a few years her senior, had been recently descending the highway to ruin. He had fallen among evil associates, and had become frightfully dissipated. He was bloated from frequent intoxication, and had already gained the unenviable notoriety of being a nightly frequenter of the gaming-table. The imp of perverseness had assumed, apparently, permanent dominion over him, and I knew that his father's heart was wrung with anguish to witness his talented son throwing himself away. I could not but recall this unfortunate young man when the fact was revealed to me that his father's will was lost. Good God! was it possible that through my fault that will was lost? Would this reprobate, this poor, unfortunate son of my dearest friend, in consequence of Erastus Brownell's dying intestate, come into unchecked possession of half of his father's princely property? That he would squander his half of the estate was as evident to my mind as an axiom. It would go to gamblers, horse-jockeys, and everything that was below his native position in society. It would swamp his last hope of reform irretrievably. Where, in the name of God, was my friend's will? my wise, prudent, and affectionate Brownell's will?

But the matter was worse, aye, a thousand times worse than this, and I was not long in ascertaining that fact after my office door was opened. The poor, lovely daughter of my friend, the lonely orphan, was before me. The anguish at the loss of her father was evident enough upon her countenance. I had left her the night before bowed down in agony, and sobbing as

if her heart would break. Poor child, she was indeed alone, for her brother could prove to her nothing but a curse. And yet she loved him. Florence Brownell was of that stamp of womankind that could never cease to love that upon which once her affection had been placed. She would cling to that abandoned brother to the last, and I knew it. I felt instinctively that something was wrong when her sweet face appeared at my door. Her father was still unburied, and something urgent must have sent her to me from the house of mourning.

"Oh! Mr. Seymour," she said, as I placed a chair for her beside my own, "nothing would have sent me from my home in this hour of death and desolation but Henry's conduct. He is dreadfully under the influence of liquor, and I know of but one thing that can sober him and make him behave himself until my poor father is under the ground. I am sure you have that in your possession, for father told me he was going to leave it with you. I mean *his will*. Henry has gained possession of an old will of father's, which gives everything into his hands. My share of father's estate is given to Henry in trust for me. Of course father revoked that will when he found how my poor brother was going to destruction and could not be trusted with any property. Henry was so elated at finding this useless will, that he drank at once to excess, and has already lost several thousand dollars with those gamblers. He says he will play against their bank now till he breaks them. I want you to go to him at once and show him my father's last will; that will sober him, I know. For his half of the property is given to you in trust, with explicit directions that he is not to receive one cent of the income, and is to be a beggar, unless he at once reforms, and follows your advice. If he drinks or gambles after you have read father's will to him, the property is to go for life to his aunt. Please go to him at once with the will."

My heart was like lead within me in an instant. My legal instinct and knowledge flashed the full force of the terrible truth to my brain. The last will, *the real will was lost; and the*

will in the possession of that reprobate had placed, not only Henry's half, but the half also belonging to Florence, in the entire control of a drunkard and a gambler. It was Florence who would be a beggar, for Henry was astute enough to pretend reformation until everything was secure in his hands. I knew how crafty that young man was at intervals. Oh! the anguish of that moment for me. I could not look my friend's child in the face. I had no will of her father in my possession to save her or her brother. She seemed surprised at my silence, and looked keenly at me as she continued:

"You have the will, have you not?"

"No, Miss Brownell, I have not," I replied. "I may as well inform you at once that the will is unaccountably gone from my table."

"Lost, Mr. Seymour, lost!" exclaimed the alarmed orphan. "How can that be? Father told me that you were the most careful business man of all his acquaintance; for that reason he should intrust his will to you."

"My dear young lady," I responded, "I feel that for a few hours I have quite lost my identity. I am not the same careful, discreet man that I was yesterday morning. *There, right there,* did I place your father's will, and then turned to converse with him. When he had gone, I placed every document on this table in my green bag, and then carried them home and locked them up in my safe. And that is the last I have ever seen of the will. But tell me what was found on your father's person besides his watch and purse—any papers, notes, letters—anything of that kind?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Seymour, I told you *that* at the house last night. There was nothing but the watch and purse. And you remember that Mr. Davige, who saw father fall, was at his side before any one else, and was with the body every instant until it was brought to us. You know he said that he took immediate possession of father's valuables, and there was no paper or letter upon his person. Did you think father might have taken the will away himself by mistake?"

"I did not really think so, Miss Brownell ; but it was a wild thought that crossed my mind—the straw at which the drowning man clutches to save himself. That was the last foothold I had on sense and reason. Look at me. Do I look sane—in the possession of my reason—like the Mr. Seymour you have known so long as your father's friend?"

"What can you mean?" she exclaimed. "Are you ill? Is anything the matter with you?"

"No, Miss Brownell, I am strong and well. But I am struggling against superstition. Hands of flesh and blood have not taken your poor father's will from me."

She stared at me in amazement. Then recovering herself, she said, "I see that you are unwell ; you have overworked your brain and you need rest. I would not devote this day to business if I were you. Never mind the will now, but come home with me and lie down on the sofa. I will talk to you, and try to cheer you up. I know how you loved father, and I do not wonder that you are a little confused and over-excited by his loss. Come ; we need your society at the house. We shall all go distracted if there is no friend's face and voice in the house—come."

I fathomed her apprehension instantly. "I am perfectly possessed of my faculties, Miss Brownell. I am not physically or mentally prostrated. I am as conscious of my mental strength at this instant as ever in my life."

I spoke calmly, and she felt reassured by my tone and manner.

"Then what do you mean by your strange language, Mr. Seymour?"

I recounted to her every particular of my receiving the will, the dispute on Spiritualism, and my dream. She listened carefully and, when I had concluded, said :

"You certainly may be pardoned for this temporary relapse into superstition. The soul is subject at times to cross the line which divides mental speculation from absurd hallucination. The very capacity to receive and hold the mysteries of religion

may, at certain moments, and under peculiarly striking coincidences, degenerate into superstition. But assuredly your presentment of the case is marvellous in the extreme. I have known your calm judgment and practical views of life too long to mistrust you now. What has become of that will?" After a moment's reflection, with her eyes studying my face, she added, "What is the legal effect of father's will being lost, Mr. Seymour?"

"Then, Miss Brownell, if no later will than the one in possession of your brother can be found, the one he has gained possession of will hold good—provided it proves to be properly executed to pass real and personal estate."

"I feared that," she said; and an expression of anguish darted across her sweet face. "Poor brother, he will be lost, and I shall be a beggar. Oh! where is that will?"

Weeks and months glided by, and at times I saw a pale, beautiful face before me, that moved my soul as it had never before been moved with anguish. It would present itself at my office door, and ask if any new fact or clue had been made manifest to me regarding the lost will, and for that poor petitioner I ever had the same hopeless response, "Not one clue to it, Miss Brownell; not one thing has occurred to clear up this mystery." The day was rapidly drawing nigh which the surrogate, before whom Henry had produced the will he had discovered, had fixed as the utmost limit he would give me to produce the lost will for probate. In a few days all would be over for poor Florence, and she knew it.

I was walking by the river one clear, beautiful night, for a breath of pure air, after the heat and fatigue of the day, and looking away over the silver path made by the moon across the water. My eyes encountered a skiff moored to a stake driven into the bank. It was a white boat with a scarlet band around the gunwale. I knew it at once. Erastus Brownell and I had many a time glided over the stream in that identical skiff. It brought his memory instantly and painfully back to me: "Ah!

my dear fellow," I murmured, instinctively looking up as I did so towards the sky, "if you have power to aid your friends on earth, why do you not save your children, by pointing out the hiding-place of that will? I should be tempted to believe your wild doctrine of Spiritualism if I should have that will placed in my hands once more."

When I entered my law office, on the ensuing morning, I found a document lying upon my table exactly in the place I had last seen the will. I eagerly examined the paper which had mysteriously passed into my office, which I always carefully locked upon retiring to my lodgings, and a shudder passed over me as I read in the handwriting of my deceased friend :

"So much for your wonderful safe—so much for Spiritualism. What a custodian of your friend's papers you are !

"ERASTUS BROWNELL."

With nervous hands I examined the document. Great heavens ! It was *the lost will*. Florence was saved. He had written this sarcasm upon the envelope, and then placed the package upon my table. There was manifestly no safe, no locked door, no obstacle of iron or brass that was proof against his spirit-touch.

Oh ! the mysterious impression, the shivering conviction of the reality of the supernatural that thrilled through me at that moment. I cannot describe it. There *was*, then, a law that transcended the limits of the senses. I had been wrong, and these Spiritualists, these *dreamers*, as I had denominated them, must be right. There lay the will in response to my upturned face of the night before, when I had invoked the spirit of my friend to save his children. I buried my face in my hands, and summoned to my assistance all the resources of god-like reason to crush this conviction of the supernatural which was taking such fast hold on me. The idea that *I*, so sensible, so cool, deliberate, careful in business and in every detail of it, could be at the mercy of disembodied shadows ! Perhaps a

whole legion of spirits were at that instant about me, enjoying my perplexity. And my grand old safe, my iron sentinel! What was it now but a card-paper box? A disembodied infant, even, could empty its contents into the street.

I turned at length to the will before me to examine it. But first I felt of my arms, and hands, and face, to see if I was substance myself, and not a spirit, or dreaming. These all felt to my touch like good, sound flesh and muscle. Then I felt of the will. That, too, was good, sound paper, and rustled as I opened it, and turned over page after page. It was a well-executed instrument, properly attested, and conformed in every particular to what Florence had told me. Her half of the estate was now safe and intrusted entirely to her own management. I was designated trustee to protect Henry's interest. God knows I would have exerted at any time my strongest efforts to reform and save Erastus Brownell's boy. As I carefully examined the provisions of the will, my old legal instincts and practical judgment returned to me, and by the time I had taken in and comprehended the entire instrument and the duties it devolved upon me, I experienced a revulsion of feeling, and felt that I had returned from my trip to the realm of the invisible. I straightened myself up in my pride of reason, and raising my hand to any stray invisibles that might be floating through my office, I exclaimed aloud:

"Now, spirits, good, bad, or indifferent, I want to see you get possession of this will again. I defy you to take it from my table again."

No responses came from the air. I laughed in derision at the very idea of any power, material or immaterial, being able again to dispossess me of that will. How difficult it is for some minds to realize the supernatural! At length, the question occurred to me, "Have I the courage once more to divert my attention from that will and see if it will again disappear?" It had vanished once before when my attention was withdrawn from it. Would it do so again under similar circumstances? I resolved to try the experiment.

I folded up the will, placed it again in its envelope, and laid it on my table. As it rested there, under precisely the same circumstances as before, except that my poor Brownell was now under the ground, I read again upon the envelope the handwriting of the departed spirit, the sarcasm which had not been there when my friend was in life: "So much for your wonderful safe—so much for Spiritualism. What a custodian of your friend's papers you are! ERASTUS BROWNELL."

I moved backward to the door of my office, taking my hat with me, but keeping my eyes fixed upon the will lying upon the table. It did not move. Then solemnly looking up towards the ceiling of the room, I said reverently, "Erastus Brownell, I am going to lock my office securely, and go down to the street. I shall be absent over the way about ten minutes. If you will exercise your power as a spirit sufficiently to remove that will while I am gone, I will accept your theory of Spiritualism."

I passed out, locked my door, tried the knob afterwards, to see that no one could enter during my absence, and walked down the street. I transacted my business over the way, and returned in the designated time. I stood before my locked office door on the outside, and recalled the terrible promise I had made to become a believer if the spirit should manifest its power again. I tried the knob; I listened at the keyhole. Not a sound came from within. My heart beat, my poor, foolish, anxious heart. I listened again. No sound came from within. I could hear in the front room of the same hall an attorney arguing a case before a referee. But my office was like the grave. Really, I feared to enter. The preceding mysteries, yet unsolved, had made the iron-hearted, resolute, cool Charles Seymour a little timid. I finally laughed at my apprehensions; a forced laugh it was, too. But my iron will returned. I fitted the key, turned it, and flung open the door. Horror! *The will was gone!*

I sat long by my table gazing upon the vacant space where the will had been. I was committed by my promise to Spirit-

ualism. I was awed beyond all expression, and with that awe mingled emotions of profound sorrow and regret. By my surrender of myself to the invisible—by my summoning the shade of the departed into that office, the will was once more gone. Oh! would it return? Or would Florence, that sweet, lovely flower of womanhood, be forever at the mercy of a prodigal and a gamester?

When I grew calmer in the long reverie which succeeded the shock of the discovery that I had become linked with the invisible agencies of another world, I endeavored to recall all I had read of supernatural manifestations in the past. I remembered that Trithem, Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Agrippa, Albertus Magnus, and other scholars of the middle ages, while admitting the most wonderful phenomena of life, had attempted to comprehend them by acknowledging the existence of certain occult laws of matter still undeveloped by science. I shook my head in doubt of such theories. It seemed too much like begging the question. My friend had promised to return to earth to convince me, and I felt that if he had not actually succeeded, he had at least placed me in that unenviable and undignified condition styled, vulgarly, "shaky."

While I sat bewildered and overwhelmed in my chair, a sharp rap sounded upon my door. To my "come in," the door flew open, and a tall young man strode into the room, and extended his hand, exclaiming bluntly, "How are you, book-worm? What! not work, but dreaming? What metamorphosis is this?"

"Sit down, Seldon," was my reply.

"What kind of a churchyard salutation is that for an old friend? Why don't you fly around and show some exultation at seeing me? 'Sit down, Seldon!' What a sepulchral accent and a welcome for a friend who has been absent so long from home!"

"I was not aware that you had been out of town, Seldon."

"No, I reckon not; you never took the trouble to come

and see. I might have been buried a month and you never know it. What's the matter with you, Seymour?"

"Spiritualism," was the response.

He stared at this brief reply. Then drawing his chair close up to me, he delivered this complimentary remark, "You're an ass, Seymour!"

"That's true, Seldon; I have just been transformed."

There was something so cold and bitter in my tone and manner that his gay *insouciant* manner was checked at once. He said kindly, "Don't talk to me in that tone. It is unjust to me. I don't deserve it. I meant nothing more than the fun and style we are always affecting. If you're in trouble, tell me; perhaps I can help you."

"I'm beyond the reach of human help," said I.

"I don't believe it, Seymour; no, not even if you've seen a ghost!"

"A ghost has carried off a very valuable paper of mine, Seldon."

"That's a tough statement," was the reply. "And, moreover, you've no redress. No process can reach the defendant. You never can obtain a judgment either, except the 'Last Judgment.' But, seriously, since you won't even smile, tell me the whole case. What has this Spiritualism aforesaid done for you?"

"Carried off the last will and testament of Erastus Brownell, deceased, from this table twice, which fact I am willing to put in an affidavit and swear to."

"According to the best of your knowledge, information, and belief."

"Yes, sir; that's the proper form. I'm willing to swear to that. I am willing to swear that spirit hands have twice taken that will from my table."

"Well, upon my soul, Charles Seymour," exclaimed my visitor, "if this is not the most wonderful instance of hallucination in a good lawyer that I have ever known, may I be teetotally smashed. After more than thirty years of wisdom, practical

knowledge, and mental skill, which have placed you in the first rank of the noble profession to which we both have the honor to belong, you relinquish it all in an instant, and declare yourself a regular *loony*. Why, if you were crazed by the beauty of a pretty girl, I could half forgive you. But I'll be hanged if I don't think you ought to be put in a straight-jacket."

It was my turn now to become enraged, as Erastus Brownell had been before at my ridicule and opposition. I sprang to my feet, exclaiming vehemently, "I'll take my solemn oath that a document has been twice taken from my table *there*, and that human hands have not done it."

Seldon laughed immoderately, and then seeing that I was growing red in the face, sprang to his feet exclaiming, "And I will swear that human hands have done it; and, moreover, that human hands will return it; and *there* it is back on your table." As he spoke he drew a paper from his breast pocket, and flung it on the table. I caught it up, and examined it. It was Erastus Brownell's will, sure enough.

"Magician!" shouted I, recoiling from him. "Give me the duplicate key of my safe. Give me the duplicate key, also, of my office door, and tell me what all this tomfoolery means."

"Sit down, Charley Seymour, and cool off. You are in an unhappy and excited condition of mind. If I were to mention this matter outside it would injure your practice. So sit down, and I will explain the whole mystery."

When Erastus Brownell and his friend were so excitedly arguing on Spiritualism, they naturally, as men do, inadvertently picked up from the table a pen and a letter, with which they drummed on the table in enforcement of their argument. They were so occupied in the discussion as to be oblivious of where the articles in their hands went to. The pen was dropped upon the table, the will, in a letter envelope, was in the hand of Brownell, and inadvertently he placed it in his breast pocket after playing unconsciously with it in his hands. He always *thrust* his letters and papers into that breast pocket. Thus he

walked off with this will which looked like a letter. On his way home he called at the office of Seldon, and, having occasion to thrust his hand into that pocket, discovered that he had brought away his will. He laughed, and remarked upon it to Seldon, and at the same time feeling suddenly ill, and unable to walk back to Seymour, wrote upon it, "So much for your wonderful safe—so much for Spiritualism—what a custodian of your friend's papers you are!" He then requested Seldon to deliver the paper to Seymour. Shortly after he dropped dead. Seldon, on his way to Seymour's office, was intercepted by a boy with a telegram requesting his attendance upon his dying sister in a neighboring town. He ran to the depot, sprang upon the platform of a car just moving off, and went out of town, still carrying the will. When he returned to town, he was taken ill himself, and remained in bed several weeks. Finding Seymour's office locked when he finally was able to go there, he tried one of his own keys, opened the door, and laid the will upon the table. Returning a short time after, he tried the door again, and finding it still locked, concluded to re-enter the office and take the will to Seymour's desk at the court-room, where he understood that lawyer was arguing a cause. Thus Seymour entering his office found the lost will. But on leaving his office for ten minutes, Seldon re-entered and carried off the will again. When Seldon came the last time, he found the office unlocked, and, under his boisterous laughter and explanations, the mystery of the lost will was done away forever."

CHAPTER XI.

*"Thro' the fair summer-time she came to me
As bright birds flit to grace a crumbling shrine,
Or like a blossomed vine with graceful twine,
That drapes with young, fresh life a leafless tree—
She came, like Undine rising from the sea,
Yet so ethereal, in the soft sunshine,
She seemed to me half mortal, half divine."*

Florence Anderson.



HEN MacGregor had finished the reading of the manuscript, he looked up in surprise at the clock on his mantel-piece. The evening shades were fast coming on. He had been wholly absorbed in the story, and now the room was lighted chiefly by the burning coals in the grate. Soon darkness would shroud the outer world. The woman's story had interested him. He detected in it the dawning of an intellect which needed encouragement. She had portrayed with skill the simple abstraction of mind of a successful forensic pleader, caused by the intense absorption in a spiritualistic argument, which had made him overlook what was passing under his very eyes. Thus had his ripe judgment and practical common sense for the moment deserted him, and he had become a victim of hallucination. The self-sufficient and the rigidly methodical are not always invulnerable to mental deception. She had performed her task well, and he determined to encourage her. So, after reflection upon the images called up by her story, he turned to his table, and by the red light of the fire alone, he penned these lines to the financial clerk of the newspaper with which he was connected :

"Write to 'Nora, Box 726, N. Y. Post Office,' that her article, *The Lost Will*, is accepted. Send her a check for forty dollars, and tell her we should be glad to hear from her again. Send her a copy of the paper when the article appears.

"MACGREGOR."

He folded the note, directed it and placed it with his editorial and other papers awaiting the coming of the office boy. Then he folded up the lady's manuscript, looked for an instant at the blue ribbon which tied the sheets of paper together, and then deposited it also with the office papers. Scarcely had he finished the last of his labors when the messenger arrived. The boy carried off the copy to the office, but left a large roll of *proof* for the editor to correct. MacGregor lighted a lamp, and by its light devoted another hour to the correction of the *proof*. That being finished, he extinguished the light which was painful to his eyes, and drew his chair once more before the coals of his grate. Quiet, rest for his brain, and warmth, were the luxuries which the convalescent hoped now to enjoy for a little time. He sat with his eyes shielded from the fire by his hand, and with his feet thrust far out towards the glowing coals. His attitude and surroundings were the only paradise the hard-worked *littérateur* ever has reason to hope for. He seemed to realize it, for, after a long silence and reverie, he said to himself :

"This, then, is the only measure of joy for me. My life must be the unending toil. Daily and excessive mental work from year to year, with only a solitary hour of rest now and then at night before the fire. Thus shall I become gray, worn out, useless at last, and drop into my grave. Will there be a bright heaven for me beyond the grave where my hungry heart shall have the fruition and fulfilment of its dream? Will there be for me, in that bright land they tell us of, some one to love me; some one to receive all this yearning tenderness of my being; some one to look into my heart, and know how true, how earnest, how faithful it has always been to a high and noble purpose? Will some woman in that far-off land of rest know MacGregor as he really is, the patient toiler, the indefatigable man of will, the soul that aspires to the possession of the pure, the beautiful, the intellectual, the grand? Will there be some woman there to love me who does not estimate a man by the gold value that attaches to his mental labor, but looks

only to the high and noble energy with which he toils. Will there be some loving heart that can wait through poverty and struggle for the diadem which comes at last? Oh God! in this hope, though far off, I can struggle on. I have no wealth to surround a woman with luxuries and display. I have naught but the daily bread earned by my pen. But I have a wealth of tenderness and affection which money cannot buy. I have a constancy of heart that empire cannot tempt. This, some day, in that far-off Eden of eternity, I can offer at the feet of woman. Will my offering be accepted? Yes! Upon the numbed and stagnant blood of my veins thrills now the memory of my vision. I shall be loved at last. Disembodied, and transported to the better land, I shall be met by the immortal trio of my vision in that deserted house. Poetry, with all its idealism made real, shall wait upon me. Intellectual brilliancy, with all its halo of scintillations, shall be forever attendant upon the mental in me. Love, sweet, precious, undying, unselfish *Love*, aye! love *eternal* shall satisfy all this life-long yearning of my hungry heart. The vision, aye! the vision! Merciful God! I bless Thee for that vision of the better land. I shall toil on alone, persistent, aspiring, but unloved here, that I may win the crown of eternal love and tenderness beyond the grave. The woman who betrayed me with a kiss, and deserted me in my earnest struggles, is fast fading away from my memory. Soon she will be to me as the execrable name of Judas. I should forget her altogether had she not torn away from me my child. Upon the bright face of that beautiful little girl I was wont to read the hope of a happy future. But she has gone, and I am alone. Oh God! who hast made me with a yearning nature, send me some companion to satisfy this tenderness and reaching forth of a father's heart, and for the coming of woman's love I will patiently await the realization of my vision beyond the grave."

The head of MacGregor was bowed upon his hand in the earnestness of his prayer. Over him, in the dark night, was *flooded* only the red firelight from the glowing coals. Shad-

ows created by that red fire were slowly moving and then fluttering upon the walls of the room. The silence of the grave was upon the solitary man, the solitary scene, the solitary prayer. Does the ineffable tenderness of God ever turn to the lonely suppliant whom He has created? Does He ever turn from the contemplation of the exquisite Heaven which His adorable presence alone creates, to answer at once the cry of the desolate? Are His promises only figurative, and undeterminable by our human measure of prayer and its answer? Does He ever answer *at once*, as men understand that term? There was surely a magnetic warmth stealing over the bowed figure of the man. It was not the heat of the red fire, which was slowly losing its ardor and causing the room to darken more and more every instant. It was something away from the fire. It was that vague and yet irresistible consciousness of *presence* which reaches man even through closed eyelids, and without the interposition of sound. The man bowed down in his loneliness was powerfully magnetic. He was intensely sympathetic or intensely repellent to the influences about him. In the gloom of the slowly darkening room, and with his eyes covered by his hand, he felt a *presence*. Gradually it dawned upon him. At first it seemed a genial warmth as if a tropical breeze had fanned him. Was the pitying God breathing upon him in answer to his eager prayer? The influence was gentle, soothing, but he remained motionless and bowed as before. So accustomed was he to the picturesque unfolding of supernatural visions, that he calmly and patiently awaited their coming. He knew not of what nature they were, whether actual revelations from the realm of spirits, or only sudden optical illusions of an imaginative brain. He never sought to analyze them, but only received them, and from experience knew they typified the occurrences of the future. And whenever or wherever they came to him, he reverently whispered the holy name of God. So now, as the genial warmth stole over him, he murmured the name of the ineffable Being in whom he once trusted. He seemed to feel the protection which the whisper of that holy

name afforded him when in the presence of that which transcended the senses.

Stronger, and more irresistible, swelled up the consciousness of a *presence* upon him. He could no longer refuse to look. A wonderful magnetism, more potent than his own, caused his hand to fall from his closed eyes. His head slowly turned away from the fire till he faced the parted red curtains that divided his study from the alcove which contained his bed. His eyes unclosed upon a vision of exquisite loveliness, the memory of which became to him immortal. Just at the opening made by the parted curtains, and with the red play of the firelight upon her face and form, stood Dream-child. Limbed and formed with all the ethereal gracefulness of a fairy, with her golden hair waving in silken softness upon her shoulders, and her large brown eyes lustrous in the glare of the fire, she looked out upon him, this child of his vision. Had she been a creature of the earth, he would have deemed her to be four years of age. One tiny hand held the parted curtain back, and in silent wonder she seemed to gaze upon him. Her infantile beauty and her amazement seemed to hold him spell-bound. The delicate refinement of the features, and the broad intellectuality of the forehead, so pure, so white, under its misty cloud of golden wavy hair—splendor seemed the realization of a poet's dream of music. From the thin, compressed lips of the delicate mouth, would not a song of melody soon issue? And as he gazed, the snowy muslin of the child's dress seemed to move. Was the vision drawing nearer? The brown, luminous eyes of the little elf seemed to show clearer in the firelight, and the outlines of her form grew more distinct. Eagerly he gazed now, that this perfection of infantile loveliness might not vanish before he could discern with certainty all the future which the vision came to unveil. A powerful magnetism was in the dark eyes of the little, gentle, dream-like creature, and from those deep, deep, wonderful eyes, he could not look away. Larger and more luminous they beamed upon him, losing nothing of *their* infantile gentleness, while holding him with magnetic

power. He could have sworn they drew closer to him, and that the parted curtains had receded from behind her. Yes! they surely advanced nearer. For the tiny hand had fallen from the curtain to her side, and she was stealing, spirit-like, upon him. Noiselessly as light travels, she approached him, and the infantile eyes beamed with tenderness. She was coming close to him, and he knew from his experience that when she touched him the vision would vanish. But what was the significance of the apparition? What of the future did it reveal? It was nearly at an end, and yet no meaning, no prophetic light had it shed upon his future. Dream-child came softly onward till she touched him. Her tiny hands were upon his knees, and her eyes were looking up to him with unutterable tenderness, and trust, and sweetness. A thrill darted through the lonely man. It was the thrill of human contact. She was real, true flesh and blood, God's exquisite moulding. He clasped her in his arms, lifted her to his lips, pressed her to his bosom, and her little head nestled there in peace.

She could not tell him whence she came. He questioned her in vain. No mother had she, no father, no sister, no nurse. To his questions as to her identity and name, she only answered, "I is Dream-child."

"Do they call you Dream-child?"

• "Yes, Dream-child."

"Who calls you Dream-child?"

"They calls me so."

"Are they men or women?"

"Yes, they is."

"Some are men and some are women?"

"Yes," she said. "But don't talk so much. Dream-child is tired. I want to go to sleep." Thus speaking, she nestled her little head in his bosom, and after a brief silence she slept, breathing low. He wondered greatly at her coming. She must have noiselessly opened his door and stolen in while he was sitting absorbed before the fire. He held her tenderly, and ever and anon looked in her face, and revelled in her wonderful

sweetness and beauty. The firelight revealed still her exquisite face, with the dark lashes veiling her eyes, and the golden mist of hair falling across her cheek and neck. She was a dream of beauty. Her half-parted lips were pink, and her breathing alone testified that she was not wholly a vision. What should he do with her? He half hoped she was a wanderer whose parents never could be found. Then he would love and cherish her, and she should grow to womanhood, close to his heart, and under his pitying care. The thought thrilled him. His heart craved something to love him in place of all the bright and beautiful which had been wrested from him. How exquisite she was, sleeping there, contentedly and peacefully, in his arms!

Finally he carried her softly to his bed in the alcove and threw over her his cloak. He left her peacefully sleeping, and pulled the bell-cord for the landlady of the house. When she answered the summons, he told her of the sweet apparition which had come to him and held aside the curtain of the alcove for her to look upon his treasure. The landlady, with rapid discernment, after she had raised the cloak and studied the child, informed him that the little waif must have stolen in through the street door, which she had left open for a few moments after sweeping the hall, and then made her way quietly up the stairs to the journalist's room.

"She is the child of people in good circumstances, you can see plainly enough by the quality of her clothes. Look at these pink satin gaiters and the pink coral necklace she has on. See how fine her muslin is, too. She looks as if she had just escaped from some children's ball or party. I declare I never saw such light, silky hair. It seems to flutter in every breath we breathe upon her."

"What will you do with her?"

"Advertise her, of course, in my paper," he replied.

"But suppose no one responds to it, what then?"

"Then I shall be glad of it, and adopt her as my own. In-

deed, I hope no one will claim her. I want something to love ; and she is a little princess of beauty."

"Why don't you get married, then, if you want to be loved?" said the landlady, who knew nothing of MacGregor's history.

"Wives are too expensive luxuries," he replied. "But tell me, landlady, will you take care of this little child for me, look after all her wants, buy her clothes for her, and all that, and bring her to sleep in my room every night? I will pay you liberally for all this?"

The landlady, after some hesitation, said, "I can find little time from my boarders for such guardianship as this. But I will tell you what you can do. My young sister has just arrived to-day, and is seeking some employment. I have given her a room near yours on this floor. Make some arrangement with her, and she will devote her time to this child, if no parents turn up to claim it. I will try and keep an eye too on the child. In this way no doubt we can get along. My sister's name is Edith Graham. She is well educated and a fine musician ; but she is poor, and is looking for some employment to earn her bread. My father's family were once wealthy ; and while that wealth lasted we all received a good education. Edith is willing to do anything to support herself, and has been contemplating teaching a class in music, if she can collect the requisite number of pupils ; or she will give private lessons. No doubt she will gladly assume the care of this child as a part of her daily employment."

"That will be a capital arrangement," he exclaimed. "Ask her by all means. Has she a room to which she can take this child when I want to be alone with my papers?"

"Oh, yes! a room on this hall ; and you can have the child with you at a moment's notice, any time you want her company."

"That is an admirable state of affairs," he said. "I sincerely hope no one will claim this child. But I shall advertise her in my paper to-morrow. I shall do all that honor requires

me to do. Then, if no one responds, Dream-child shall be mine."

"What name is that?" said the landlady.

"That is the name she says they called her by."

"Strange name, indeed," she replied. "But then I must say she is beautiful as any dream I ever had. I never saw anything so lovely. Look at her."

The two bent over the sleeping child in admiration. Every feature, every limb was perfect; and, in the light of the lamp the landlady had brought with her, they could see the rosy flush upon her exquisite cheek, and the shell-like delicacy of her ear, and the pink flush under her tapering finger-nails.

"It would be a shame to rob any father or mother of such a beauty," whispered the landlady, as she drew the cloak again over the form of the child.

"I will never rob any one," he replied, "but will do all my duty in the premises. If I can't find any claimant for the child, there my duty ceases, and I shall adopt her myself."

"Certainly," she replied. "Now let me tell you what I advise you to do. Let me take this child to my sister's room to-night. We will undress her and put her to bed there. In the morning, or whenever to-morrow your duties will allow, you can send for her to come to your room."

"That will be best," he said. "But be sure and secure your sister's services to take care of this child."

"I will; trust me," she said. "You are too good a man to be living without love or companionship. Perhaps this little waif may give you new ideas on the subject of matrimony."

"I doubt it," he said, laughing. "But will you take the child with you now? I hear my office-boy coming upstairs for my proofs."

"Yes," she said. "Here, take my lamp, and I will carry the little darling. Leave the lamp at the head of the stairs for me."

Thus speaking, she relinquished the lamp to MacGregor, took the child up tenderly, and walked out of the room with it

sleeping in her arms. She passed on to the room of her sister ; and he, after depositing her lamp as she had requested, returned to his room, where the office-boy was now waiting for the corrected proofs.

From that night MacGregor realized that in his dark life a star had arisen. He had found something around which the tendrils of his heart might cling. The almost woman's tenderness of his nature had at last found its shrine for worship. He loved the child, and none came to dispute his right. But about the treasure which had seemed to come to him in answer to his prayer, a mystery hovered. Who and what was the child ? Was it indeed of the earth, or of the skies ? Every evening, at his lodgings, when the cares of the day were over, this phantom-child came to him. In the gray of the gloaming, as he sat by his window watching for the advent of the evening star, he heard the patter of little feet along the hall. Then the child would pause before his door, and call to him in childish accents. He rejoiced at her coming, for she was his only companion. He had isolated himself from the other inmates of the house, and his meals were taken out at restaurants, wherever he might chance to find it most convenient. In his anguish of soul at the destruction of his family circle, the memory of which still haunted him, he chose to be alone. There seemed to be no congenial souls for him under that roof. The landlady was the only inmate of the house who ever invaded his sanctum ; and she, perfect lady as she was, never came without good reason. She saw that he was under a cloud and desired familiarity with no one. Dream-child alone gained admittance. When the clock struck eight upon the mantel-piece, the little girl slid from his lap, and glided away after a kiss had been proffered and returned. The child was a marvellous soul, an independent little princess of thought, despising everything which savored of craft, and apparently reaching upward in thought day by day to regain the Deity from which she emanated. Oh ! the wonderful influence of this strange,

meditative, dreaming little elf upon his existence. She seemed at times to read his secret thoughts as he sat silent communing with the stars. She would look up into his face, after sitting long in his lap, without uttering a word, and having been apparently lost in a reverie of her own, and with the winning suavity of childhood, exclaim, abruptly:

"Dream-child has been up there too."

"Where, my darling? up where?"

"In the land beyond the stars," she said, and the little voice seemed to end with a musical cadence.

"Have I been up there? Why do you think that?"

"Because you sit so still, and look up. Dream-child was looking up, too. I saw them singing, and the air was full of birds, all singing, the people singing, the birds singing, the little children singing; so beautiful, so beautiful, MacGregor." The child could not be taught to call him by any other name.

"But it is night, Dream-child, and the birds do not sing at night."

"There is no night up there, MacGregor."

"Who told you that? That you heard some one read from the Bible."

"No, MacGregor, Dream-child didn't know that was in the Bible."

"Did no one tell you that there is no night up there?"

"No," she said, with a solemn shake of her head. "Why should they? I can see up there. Then why should they tell Dream-child what she can see?"

"But our eyes cannot see so far. We could not see birds or people, or hear them sing, even if they were up there."

She looked up seriously into his face and said:

"But you saw people up there just now, and they were marching and singing. There were thousands and thousands of them, and little girls in white were kneeling in a bright light, and thousands of birds were singing in the trees above them. You saw them, MacGregor. Then how can you tell Dream-child such a story?"

"How do you know I saw them?" he inquired in amazement.

"Because I was looking into you, and I saw just what you saw."

"And can you read my thoughts, you strange child?"

"Sometimes I can, when you sit still."

"Let me see if you can tell me what I think of now. I will sit still and never move, and close my eyes. Now wait until I think."

The two sat silent for several minutes, he with his eyes closed, she looking forth with her eager, pensive, infantile face directed upward to the holy stars of the evening. At last she said, "You see a little girl who looks like you. She has hold of her mother's hand. She is coming right straight to you from a boat. She has been on the lake, and there are great mountains ever so high by the lake. The wind blows, and the lake is all black. They most went down in the water, and then you would never, no, never see your little girl again. You are trembling all over with fright, and now you are laughing and crying, you are so glad. They are all safe now, and your heart says, 'Thank God! thank God! I will never sin any more. I am so grateful to God. My baby, my baby, my precious baby, is saved.'"

"What is in the boat?" inquired MacGregor, in amazement.

"A black man; just as black as ink. He don't know how to row the boat much, and the water is just pouring into it."

"What is coming now?" he inquired again.

"Another boat, a great big boat with four men. They will catch the other boat. They've caught it now, and the little girl, yes, and her mother too, are getting into the big boat."

"Where is the black man now?" he inquired.

"He's all alone in the little boat, and he's going right on to the shore. They're all on the shore now, and the wind is blowing the branches right out of the trees."

Such were the evidences which convinced MacGregor, after many nights of experiment, that into his possession had fallen

an infantile clairvoyant of remarkable power and accuracy, and that at certain hours of the evening Dream-child had almost unlimited access to the secret thoughts of his heart. In detailing the scenes upon the lake, and the boats in the storm, she had followed his memory of the danger to his own wife and child which had been averted upon a lake in Scotland by the reappearance of a large, four-oared boat, which rescued them from a watery grave.

This strange child grew and matured in intellect under his protecting care, and that of the young lady who had consented to become her governess. She became the one great joy of his life, for his affection she returned with ardor, and he never spent a lonely night again. Dream-child came every evening and warmed his heart by her society until the clock struck eight. One evening, as she sat in his lap, gazing at the beauty of the evening star, large, luminous, and alone, as it lifted above the low hanging clouds of the West, she broke the silence, thus :

"So Dream-child is your only star. Poor MacGregor, what will you do when Dream-child dies?"

These words were the startling repetition of his thoughts of the moment.

"What manner of child is this?" he exclaimed. "Tell me, little one, did you ever live before this world was made?"

"No," said the child, thoughtfully.

"Where, then, did you come from when you came to me?"

"From God," she replied, seriously.

"And where is God?" he said.

"Everywhere."

"And did you come from everywhere?"

"Yes," she said. "And when I die I shall go everywhere. The wind will blow me all over the world."

"You mean you will be dust."

"Yes, Dream-child will be dust."


"Did any one tell you this?"

"No."

CHAPTER XII.

*"Man is his own star, and the soul that can"
 Render an honest and a perfect man,
 Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
 Nothing to him falls early or too late.
 Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
 Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."*

Fletcher.

 HE heart of MacGregor had barely commenced to warm towards the mysterious child who had come to him from the unknown, perhaps from the supernatural, when a pang of unutterable agony was inflicted upon him by a letter received from an old friend in his native town. It informed him of the death of his little daughter. Five years had elapsed since her mother had torn the child away and fled. During that period of excessive toil and desolation, he had made several ineffectual attempts to send a letter to his child. No answer was received. He felt confident that the demon-heart of the mother had prompted her to destroy the letters, that thus the child might grow up devoid of any knowledge of, or affection for, her father. There was an insatiable yearning on the part of the father to have the child grow to womanhood with a tender remembrance of him who had loved her so well. That natural feeling had been thwarted by a woman who knelt weekly in the church of God, and whispered the name of Jesus. Perhaps Jesus smiled upon her, and heard her prayers. The woman had appeared to use every effort to conceal her whereabouts from the man who had once been her husband. She passed from town to town, until at last he lost track of her altogether. The letter from his old friend was a kind one, and was written in noble sympathy for the man he had respected and loved. He had heard of MacGregor's separation from his wife, and feared that now he might not have heard of the death-angel's visit to his child. It was by mere accident that he had heard of the event himself when passing through a strange town. "The little girl died in B—, and was buried

there by her mother. It was told me by one of the villagers, that in her last illness she repeatedly called out the name of her father, as if the old affection of her infancy was still slumbering in her warm, little heart. I heard that shortly after the funeral her mother moved away from the village, and no one seemed to know where she had gone."

For an hour, after the receipt of this agonizing communication, MacGregor paced the room like a fiend. The cruelty of the mother who would not even invite him to the death-bed of his only child, the malice of the angry wife, which softened not even when the death-shadow settled upon the little one who had been born of them both, transcended almost his powers of belief. "Such a woman is worthy of death," he said fiercely, with all the tiger in him aroused, "and I will be the agent of the avenging God to slay her." For a moment the woman's life was again in jeopardy. But in the wildest moments of that strong man's rage, and when the demon seemed almost let loose upon its errand of destruction, there was always at the critical moment a whisper, potent as God, which said to him: "Wait; I, thy God, am the avenger of the hunted and the persecuted. Vengeance is mine. I am a God of *justice*!"

For hours after this still, small voice had whispered to him, he paced back and forth trying to regain perfect mastery over himself. It was a mighty struggle. Only those who feel intensely can appreciate it. The agony of the desolate heart that has been robbed of all its dream of life, and whose future appears like a void of utter blackness, is close upon the frenzy of madness. If God triumphs in that great trial of the soul, the man becomes stronger for the life battle. His very being is exalted by the victory he has won. The suffering becomes a purifier of his character. He is then fitted to enjoy that which God will surely reward him with.

The storm was over at last, and there was a calm. The haggard features alone told of the tempest which had swept by and left reason steady upon its throne. MacGregor sent for *Dream-child*. She came pattering along the hall, and called

to him from without his door. He opened the door, and the little elf entered, radiant and loving. She was pressed long to his heart, in silence. At last he said :

"What are you thinking about, Dream-child?"

"Endurance," said the gentle voice, with the gravity of a sage.

"And who taught you, you little one, such a long, solemn word?"

"Tooty," replied the child, raising her head from his breast, and turning in his lap to look at him. Tooty was the name she had given the young sister of the landlady, who had been employed by MacGregor to take care of her.

"And what does Tooty know about endurance?" he inquired, still more amazed.

"Don't you think anybody has trouble but you, MacGregor?"

The journalist smiled at the gravity of the child. It was in such strange contrast too her usual merry, happy ways.

"No doubt everybody has some troubles, Dream-child. But Tooty is too young yet for trouble. Young ladies don't have any very serious trouble."

"Sometimes they do, MacGregor," she said, pushing her golden hair behind her ear. "Tooty is poor, for she told me so, and she has to work, work all the time. And then I'll tell you something if you won't tell," she added, mysteriously.

"Well, I won't tell," he said.

"Tooty cries awful hard at night. She don't think I know it. But I do; for sometimes I lie awake with my eyes shut, and I hear Tooty sob. Don't you think poor Tooty must know something about endurance?"

"And what induced Tooty," he said, deeply moved at the thought that one so young as the governess was trying to conceal her secret grief, "to use such a long word to such a little thing as you?"

"I heard her saying something low to herself one night,

when she thought I was asleep. So I teased her until she taught it to me."

"What was it, Dream-child?"

The little elf cleared her throat, made one or two false starts in the verse, then started right, and slowly and distinctly pronounced the following:

"Endurance.

Man's best philosophy—life's purest creed,
Christian as Epictetic, is, to bear
Our yoke un murmuring; balance that we need
With that which we desire; to bound our prayer
To heaven's good pleasure; make the word and deed
Our heart's true mirror; in our breast to wear
Bravely our badge; and if at last we leave
Some trait worth name, what more could man achieve?"

The words seemed to impress him deeply. He made the child repeat them over to him several times, until he had learned them himself. Who could this young lady be? To soothe her own anguish in life, she possessed, doubtless, a fund of similar quotations to the one she had been forced, by the importunity of the child, to repeat. Immersed in the depths of his own sorrows, his own excessive toil, and rayless solitude he had forgotten that others suffered, perhaps, as keenly as himself. He had been pleased by the lady-like appearance and quiet manners of the landlady's sister, when he had been presented to her in the public parlor of the house for the purpose of arranging with her the terms of her salary for taking care of and instructing Dream-child. But after this brief interview he never encountered her. She remained in her room, and sent the child to him at the hour he had designated as the one he would be at leisure from his editorial duties. She had carefully followed his instructions regarding the style and quality of dress he was willing to clothe Dream-child in, and had made the purchases for her accordingly, out of the fund he had placed at her disposal. But his eyes never encountered her afterwards, and he supposed her to be absorbed utterly in her duties to her ward, and to the musical scholars he understood she was teaching about the city. He left the house early in

the morning, and returned at dark, going directly up to his room, and so had no opportunity of meeting her. He preferred entire isolation at his lodgings, and there was no one to intrude upon his privacy except his adopted child.

But now the appropriateness of the quotation to his own troubled condition of mind struck him at once, and he could not but wonder if the music-teacher really had experiences of life as bitter as his own. The landlady had informed him that her sister was poor. But he had encountered in his professional career many young ladies who were poor, educated, and struggling hard to earn their bread. Why should he be particularly interested in this new unfortunate, who was buffeting the waves of adversity? He was really so wrung with the old, old anguish of his ruined home, and his baffled hopes, that his thoughts could not long dwell upon the troubles of any woman. He soon dismissed the subject from his thoughts, and sent away little Dream-child to her governess. The sound of the little feet died away in the distance, and he sat alone, meditating upon the child, and the strong hold she was taking upon his affections. What could he do for her in life? The question recurred again and again to him. His salary as editor could now comfortably maintain himself and Dream-child in lodgings. He had become a rigid economist. He had no luxuries. He was endeavoring to deposit, month by month, in the savings bank, a small amount that in the coming days of sickness or poverty he might have a little home, and a little repose in old age. During his entire life he had idealized the thought of home. He had toiled for it, denied himself comforts for it, and fancied at one time that he was near the realization of it. His wife had ruined all, just as he seemed upon the point of realizing his dream. Now the plan must all be wrought out in another form. He resolved to hoard every dollar that he could spare from the support of himself and the little elf God had sent him, and, by keeping it at interest, to gradually build up for himself a competence. His dream now was the common dream of many a poor, toiling *littérateur* of

the metropolis, a home in the country, the rich, beautiful, green and wooded retirement from the noise and confusion of human traffic. The heart of MacGregor was a poet's heart, and he longed once more for the hills, woods, and meadows of his childhood's years. As he sat there alone the industry and perseverance of his laborious life in the past, and the good will of God, were preparing two great surprises for him. The footfalls of the first surprise were already at the door of his lodging-house. In the silence of the evening he heard the street-door-bell ring. Doubtless one of the many callers upon the boarders in the house was at the door. Presently a servant knocked at the door of his room, and handed him three cards. He lighted his lamp, glanced at the names, and said :

"Did all three ask for me?"

"Yes, sir," was the response.

"Then show them up to this room."

"Yes, sir," said the servant, disappearing.

"I can understand why Peter J. Raymond should call," he said, looking at the cards again. "But what signifies the address of the other two?"

He was not long left in uncertainty. The door was flung open, and three merchant princes of the city stood before him. The three gentlemen, who seated themselves at his invitation, represented together property to the amount of thirty millions. They were manufacturers, and, moreover, stockholders in the paper of which MacGregor was editor : Peter J. Raymond, the most solid in personal appearance, and the most genial in address, after the preliminaries of hand-shaking and welcome had been enacted, opened the subject of their coming thus :

"Mr. MacGregor, your conduct of our paper has given almost universal satisfaction to the stockholders. You have now, for several years, devoted your entire time and energies to it, and have done so upon a salary wholly inadequate to the support of a family at the present enormous cost of living. Talent, and energy, and fidelity like yours, are sometimes overlooked. We do not intend that *your* services shall be

overlooked. You may or may not be aware of the tremendous influence your able leader on the tariff has exerted upon our party prospects. It was masterly. We have reason to believe that, in consequence of it, great pecuniary advantage is about to result to us, the three gentlemen present, and other of the stockholders of our paper. We need you, sir, in the very position you now occupy; and to prove the sincerity of our regard and confidence in you, we take this opportunity for ourselves, and in behalf of the stockholders, whom we represent, to present you with the inclosed papers. Wishing you a happy and prosperous life, we desire you to open and read these papers only after we are gone. We have no time, from the press of other business to-night, to tarry another minute. So we will bid you good-night, and hasten on." As he concluded, the nervous speaker held out a packet of papers to the editor, and before he could stammer out an acknowledgment, shook him by the hand, and said, laughingly: "Good-night, my dear sir. This is a surprise-party to you, and we intended it as such—good-night." Thus the three gentlemen, smiling, and evidently happy with their own secret thoughts, bade him a hasty farewell and left him. He followed them to the head of the stairs, begging for some explanation, and entreating them to remain. But they were inexorable, and left in evident mirth at the amazement they had aroused. MacGregor walked slowly back to his room and closed the door with that calmness which is born of despair. He felt that the worst life could ever bring him was in the Past. The Future could be but the stupor which excessive toil brings. His curiosity was, however, aroused, and he seated himself by his table to read the papers they had given him. He opened the papers, after breaking the outer seal, and discovered something that caused him more delight than he believed life yet possessed for him. The stockholders had presented MacGregor with shares of the stock in the newspaper to the amount of *ten thousand dollars*. They had also enclosed with these shares a deed in fee to a house and grounds in the country,

valued at ten thousand dollars more. A fine specimen of penmanship also accompanied the deed, giving a detailed account of the house, and the meadows, woodland, and waters, belonging to, and deeded with it. The poor, desolate, heart-broken, and deserted man, was almost crazy with delight. He trembled with the intensity of his emotion. His life had not then been all in vain. Some had recognized him, knew his abilities, and reached forth kind hands to him. Oh! the overpowering influence of kindness upon a heart that is capable of gratitude, and has been crushed between the weight of unmerited cruelty. A home, merciful God! a home, his own, free of debt or encumbrance, a home in the country under the trees, with the perfume of flowers and the laughter of brooks and the music of birds about it. In the heat of the summer he could go there and revel with nature, drop the weary pen, shun the hot air of the city office, and breathe the air of the mountains and woods. There could he wander, hand in hand with Dream-child, and watch the influence of nature upon her poetic, dreaming little heart. In the excessive tenderness which sudden joy brings to a noble being, he lifted up his heart in gratitude to God. He had forgotten his Creator in the long bitterness of his agony, but now remembrance of his mother's God returned to him. He sat long in silence, dreaming over the rest which God had surely given in the summer which was coming. Then he turned to his writing materials, and penned a warm letter of thanks to the committee of the stockholders who had so generously poured light and cheer into his solitary existence. This duty accomplished, he took up some of the country papers which exchanged with his office, and glancing over their columns, occasionally cut from them items of news for republication in his paper. There was an elasticity of feeling in him, as he pursued his task, which had been a stranger to him for several years. At last his eye rested upon the following item of country intelligence, which finally he cut out with his editorial scissors for the columns of his own paper.

"*This property,*" he said to himself, "*cannot be far distant*

from the home which the stockholders have purchased for me. By the terms of the deed, I must be bounded on one side by the manor property."

The item which he transferred to the pages of his own paper read thus :

"Termination of the great Delancy murder trial. Arthur Delancy has been discharged from prison. The prosecution were unable to make out their case. The circumstantial evidence was powerfully against the prisoner, and there seems little reason to doubt that Hartwell was murdered in the study of the Delancy manor-house by the prisoner, or with the connivance of some of his family. The people of the county are intensely excited on account of his discharge, but it is proper to say that he has hundreds of sympathizers among the landholders and the most respectable men of his neighborhood, who believe him to be innocent. The court held, and so charged the jury, that no man can be convicted of murder, unless the body of the murdered man can be produced. The judge in his charge cited a case in his own experience, where the evidence was even more conclusive against the prisoner than it was against Delancy, 'and yet,' said the judge, 'while we were trying the case, the murdered man walked into the court.' It appears that the principle of the law is absolute, and that no conviction can be had unless absolute proof exists that the victim is dead. Not the slightest trace can be found of Hartwell's body. This is said to be one of the most singular criminal cases on record."

Scarcely had he put this item in the little box where such matter was deposited for the next day's paper, when he was startled by a cry under his window. He glanced at his clock on the mantel-piece. It indicated the hour of *twelve*. The cry of distress was repeated. He threw up the window, and by the light of the street lamp saw a man struggling with two ruffians. MacGregor had recovered his health and strength, and was the last man in the city who would turn a deaf ear to a human being fighting for his life. He darted across the room, passed into the hall, ran down the stairs, unlocked the street

door, and hastened to the scene of the conflict. The stranger was making a gallant fight for his life, and with his club cane had dealt one of the ruffians such a blow upon the head that he was staggering away to the wall of the house for support. But the other ruffian was too much for him, and had succeeded in wresting away the uplifted cane, and flinging it aside, had rushed upon the stranger and hurled him to the pavement, where he was about to plunge a knife into his throat, when his arm was arrested by MacGregor. With one hand the powerful journalist held back the murderous arm, and with the other seized the ruffian's throat, and choked him, until he fell back strangling upon the pavement. The stranger, rising to his feet, picked up his cane again, and made for the man clinging to the wall, and whom he had partially disabled by the first blow with his cane. He saw that the man was recovering from the effects of the blow, and was preparing for another assault. By a quick and well-directed blow with the club-cane, he stretched the ruffian senseless on the pavement, and then turned to the assistance of the man who had saved his life. His services were not required, for MacGregor had his man in a perfect state of non-resistance.

"What is your name, sir?" inquired the stranger. "You have saved my life."

"MacGregor," was the response, "Editor of the New York Constitution."

"MacGregor, I will repay you for your courage some day; good-night, sir." The stranger was moving rapidly off.

"Stay!" exclaimed the journalist. "Will you not enter a complaint against these murderous wretches. Call a policeman. I will hold this wretch until one comes up."

"No, no," was the response. "I have no time to enter complaints. Let the rascals go. Good-night, sir. You have done me the greatest service one man can do another." The speaker walked rapidly away. MacGregor noticed that the stranger was powerfully framed, and wore a long black beard falling low upon his breast. He pulled his black slouched hat over his

eyes as he walked off, as if desirous of escaping observation himself.

"I suspect he is one of the gang," muttered MacGregor. "He doesn't look like a respectable citizen himself. Police, police," he shouted, still holding the ruffian by the neck, that he might not arise. An officer appeared soon after, and another came up. MacGregor relinquished his prisoner to their keeping, giving them a statement of his share in the affray.

"Where's the man you rescued?" inquired one of the officers. MacGregor gave him a description of the stranger, and the manner and words of his exit.

"A tramp belonging to their gang, doubtless," said the policeman. "They have fallen out with him, and he has run off, so as not to be recognized. Very well, I will take charge of these fellows, and to-morrow you can come around to the station-house and give us a formal account of the affair. I know you, Mr. MacGregor, and I read your paper every day. I wonder this fellow didn't get the best of you. He's a state's-prison bird, and as strong in the prize-ring as a giant. You must have muscle, sir."

"I have my share," said the journalist, grimly. "But good-night. I will call around at the station to-morrow morning."

"All right, Mr. MacGregor," was the response, as the door of the house was closed and locked behind the journalist, who ascended to his room, rather refreshed than otherwise by his exercise in the open air. It was a mortifying reflection to him, however, that he had probably hazarded his life in defending, not an honest citizen, but one of a gang of robbers and murderers. However, he had acted from a generous impulse, and God looks upon the intention of the heart.

But *was* the rescued man a thief, or a murderer? Was he one of the gang, as the policeman had surmised?

While MacGregor was, after the midnight hour, occupied once more in completing his material for the next issue of his paper, the man with the long dark beard and the slouched hat was rapidly making his way towards the lower and more

densely built portion of the metropolis. He arrived at length, after a long walk, in that quarter of the city which was devoted particularly to the uses of shipping and their stores. The docks and piers were dimly visible in the lamplight from the corners of the streets, and the broad river rolled darkly on towards the sea. The forests of masts of the ocean ships were stretching away, along the piers, and were enveloped in silence and gloom, save where an occasional ship lantern flung its sickly light amid the spars and cordage. The man paused, at last, at a sailors' boarding-house on the street which ran along the wharf, and entering the bar-room, where the bar-tender sat alone and half asleep, demanded a room and board for a week, at the same time producing his wallet and offering to pay in advance for his accommodations. The half-intoxicated representative of the landlord was finally sufficiently aroused to attend to his duties, and after scanning the applicant curiously, took from him the week's advance for board, and taking up a lamp, conducted him to a small bedroom, and left him in possession, together with the lamp. After the bar-tender had withdrawn, and the door was locked, the occupant of the room removed his greatcoat and clothing, and then drew from his breast a small canvas bag containing gold. It was the same bag which Mrs. Jourdan Delancy had flung out into the snow, from the window of the manor-house, on the night following the murder. The gold had diminished in quantity since that time, but not greatly. There was still remaining plenty of coin for journey and adventure. He placed the bag under his pillow, and beside it his ever-ready revolver. As the bosom of his shirt was revealed to the light of the lamp, there glistened upon it two objects, which, had Miss Marie Delancy chanced to see them, would have elicited a start of surprise. They were two golden studs, the mates of the one the rector had exhibited to her as a clue to the murderer of the unknown man, who lay buried on the manor near the porter's gate. Upon each of them was an Arabic character enamelled in black. They occupied the two lower stud-holes of the shirt-bosom, and the

upper or third stud-hole was occupied by a gold stud, different in form, and having in it a single diamond of great lustre and beauty. There was no doubt that the reverend Henry Morgan held possession of the enamelled stud which would have made this set complete.

CHAPTER XIII.

*"Dreams of a stately land
Where rose and lotus open to the sun,
Where green savane and misty mountain stand
By lordly valor won."*

Annie Chambers Ketchum.

THE occupant of the little bedroom at the sailors' boarding-house remained in possession of his quarters during the week for which he had paid in advance. He came down into the bar-room occasionally, and made free with the sailors, treating them at the bar, and listening to their "yarns" of the long voyage. He was very reticent regarding himself, and they elicited from him no further knowledge of his affairs than the statement that he had been a farmer in Western New York, and was now determined to see something of life beyond the seas. He chatted with them, exhibiting all the curiosity of a landsman regarding foreign parts, and succeeded in drawing out from them all that he wished to know regarding the ports and rivers of the eastern coast of South America. He seemed never to weary of this, and before the close of the week he was master of all they knew upon the subject. Finally, he encountered a seaman who had made many voyages to the South American ports, and from him he learned that a ship was about to sail for the Amazon river. It was a trading vessel, and had never carried passengers. But the captain had recently fitted up four state-rooms upon his craft, which he was willing to rent to passengers who would be content with the usual rough fare of the captain

and mates. This was precisely what the stranger was looking for: a state-room upon some obscure sailing-vessel, where the prying eyes of police and detectives were not likely to be on the alert for suspicious-looking travellers. His beard and hair were false, and he desired no practised eyes to be upon him. Finally, under the genial influence of liquor, the sailor volunteered to conduct his new acquaintance to the vessel, and introduce him to the officers. His proposition was at once accepted, and before another hour had elapsed, he had inspected the ship, and concluded an agreement for one of the state-rooms and his board. The Amazon river was his destination. During the two days which elapsed before the sailing of the vessel, the stranger (who will hereafter be designated by the term given him upon his memorable night rides, "*The White Mask*") occupied himself in making purchases for his expedition. Among other articles bought from the fund Mrs. Jourdan Delancy had flung to him from the window of the manor-house, was a rifle, and ammunition for the same, a hunting-knife, and axe, a sailor's outfit, of the roughest and most durable fabrics he could find, and a chest, ample enough to contain them all. He obtained from the captain, also, the privilege of stowing away amidships a four-oared boat, and a canvas tent which he had purchased. It was generally understood on board the ship that he was an eccentric individual, who was going upon an independent exploring and hunting expedition up the Amazon. The sailors shook their heads ominously when this was given out, and volunteered the opinion that he would never return from his solitary trip. Beast and savage, they said, would circumvent him in the long run. It would be an unwise and dangerous voyage, even for an experienced seaman, and for a landsman, sheer madness. Some suggested that the daring adventurer was indeed *non compos mentis*. But upon a more intimate acquaintance with their fellow-voyager, they soon learned to speak in more respectful terms of him.

On the day preceding the sailing of the ship, the White

Mask left his boarding-house, and sought a quarter of the city where the greater portion of the traffic was carried on by the Jews. Dealers in second-hand clothing, and new ready-made clothing, jewellers, and picture-dealers, carpet-dealers, and bankers, displayed their signs on every side; and with this locality the man with the false, black beard and hair seemed quite familiar. The industrious and frugal Jews had almost unlimited sway in this quarter of the city, and the White Mask looked upon many a sign above the stores with which he had been familiar for years. He arrived, at length, before a banking establishment, upon whose windows was lettered in gold "Nathan Ettinger." Two stone steps led up to the front door of this private bank, but he avoided them, and rang the door-bell of the house adjoining. A dark-visaged Hebrew servant-girl opened the door for him.

"Is Miss Ettinger in?" he inquired.

"Who shall I say calls, if she is in?" responded the girl.

"Give her this card," replied the White Mask, producing a card from his pocket, and writing with a pencil upon it these words: "*The detective is too ill to call, but sends a substitute from the office, on urgent business.*" S. RAY."

The servant disappeared up the stairs, and left him standing in the hall. She soon returned with this answer:

"Miss Ettinger says, walk up to the parlor."

In another minute he was seated in a comfortable apartment, elegantly furnished, and warmed by a grate fire. He had to wait several minutes for the mistress of the house to make her appearance, and improved the opportunity to meditate upon his programme, when he should meet her face to face. He was playing a desperate game, and his first card had been wondrously successful. He always played desperate games to gain his ends. He doubted not that he should escape now, even if the principal object of his call proved a failure. At length, a beautiful Jewess, whose features were stamped with remarkable evidences of intelligence, made her appearance, saluted him, and to his delight opened the subject herself.

"Mr. Ray, I hope the detective has found some clue. So many years have now elapsed, that I have almost given up all hope of gaining satisfactory intelligence, or of obtaining justice."

"Do not despair," was the response. "In these matters there can be no failure, if patience and will are ever alive. The detective was too ill to see you to-day, but sent me from the office to show you what we have found, and to ask your co-operation."

"I will certainly assist you by every means in my power," she said. "But what have you found?"

"Nothing less," he replied with earnest tone, "than the two other studs. Do you believe it? Would you recognize them?"

"Most certainly," she exclaimed.

"Well, then," he continued, "to whom do these studs belong?" He produced from his coat pocket two gold studs enamelled with an Arabic character in black.

The young lady uttered an exclamation of surprise, took them, examined them, and said: "You are almost miraculous in your discoveries. Your department is wonderful. These are my poor father's studs, and the very same he had on when he was last seen. There is no doubt about it, and if you will wait a moment, I will show you the third one, which makes the set complete."

"Certainly, Miss Ettinger," he said, "that is the very reason I was sent here. Bring it to me at once."

The young lady hastened from the room in evident excitement, and when she had disappeared, the disguised man paced the room rapidly. If one more success followed this, his entire purpose would be effected. He had not been certain in whose hands the third stud had fallen. He knew that it had passed from the possession of Rev. Henry Morgan into the possession of the detective department. The announcement of Miss Ettinger that she held it was such startling good news for him that he had with difficulty concealed his surprise and eagerness. One more effort only was required now to place *him* at the apex of his aspirations. It had occurred to him

that possibly the detective department might, after having sufficiently familiarized themselves with the appearance of the missing man's stud, have given it to the daughter. It was a bare possibility, but to him even a bare possibility was worth following up. The result had justified his judgment in the matter. Could he now obtain possession of the third stud? He was all eagerness now for the young lady's reappearance. When at last she came, with the stud in her hand, he calmly inspected it and compared it with the two in his possession. There could be no question as to the similarity of the three. For the first time in years, the set was complete, and in one hand. Then he passed the three into the young lady's hand. She compared them, and declared that all three of them had belonged to her missing father.

"Now," said the White Mask, "the detective is anxious to ascertain the jeweller who made this set."

"I don't know how he can do that," replied Miss Ettinger. "I do not know that they were made in this city."

"Did you never," said the White Mask, "hear your father speak about these studs? There is something so peculiar about their pattern, that they would naturally enough call forth remark from his family."

"Oh yes," she said, "father has mentioned them to my mother and myself. He used to laugh when we asked him what the Arabic character signified, and say, '*That is a secret. They will make my fortune some day. That character is a talisman.*'"

"And you never heard him hint who the jeweller was?"

"Never," she replied. "He was for some reason unwilling to continue the subject long. We often told him he was making fun of us by keeping up such a mystery about three old studs."

"That jeweller *must* be found," said the White Mask emphatically, "and the detective officer wants me to bring the three studs to every jeweller and manufacturer of jewelry in this city. The chances are that your father, being a Hebrew,

purchased his jewelry from one of that faith. Now my mission here is to take these three studs, and go the rounds of the city, and see if I can track out the jeweller who sold them."

"And this is a vital point for the detectives?" she inquired.

"It is," said the White Mask. "Well, here are the studs," she said, handing the three to the stranger. "I suppose they will be returned to me."

"Unquestionably they will," he said. "The detective officers sacredly preserve every article of private property for the owners. I must go now, Miss Ettinger. You will hear something important from the office before long, I have no doubt. Good-day." And so the successful trickster bowed himself out, bearing off the three studs in triumph. He had outwitted the detective department, for the importance of one clue in the unravelling of Hartwell's connection with the murder of the unknown was greatly impaired by the loss of the only stud they had within their reach. How had this mysterious White Mask ascertained that the Rev. Henry Morgan had one of the studs, and had transferred it to the hands of the detective?

How exultantly the possessor of the three studs made his way through the streets of the city, and regained his room at the sailor's boarding-house. He had something more important to him now than the bag of gold Mrs. Jourdan Delancy had flung to him from the window of the manor-house.

"Audacity wins, audacity wins," he said to himself, as he once more locked himself in his little bedroom, and proceeded to test the value of his new acquisition. He drew from the inside pocket of his greatcoat a small parchment roll. The sheepskin was old, and yellow with dirt and handling. He spread it out on the table before him, and placed weights upon the four corners of it to keep it open and flat. Then he studied carefully the map which had long, long years before been traced upon it. Through the centre of it ran a broad and long river. Mountains and streams were plainly traced, and even the characters of the forests were noted, and their kind of trees designated, each group of trees having its name written beneath

it. Islands were easily distinguishable in the great central river of the map which continued its onward course until it widened out at last into the Eastern Ocean or sea. In one corner of the map were delicately traced with a pen these words :

"This map is useless without the talismanic circles. Having found them, place one upon each letter A wherever it appears on the map. Then make each of the single dots of the talismanic circles the corner of a triangle. The centre of this triangle will be the object of your search."

The White Mask looking over the map, discovered the letter A in three places. He then placed directly over the centre of each A one of the golden studs. The circular piece of gold just hid from sight the letter beneath it. Upon the top of the stud thus placed was the Arabic character with two enamelled dots just above it, and one dot just below its lower right-hand corner. The latter was unquestionably the single dot of the directions which was to be made the corner of a triangle. Having thus obtained his three corners, he carefully connected them with a white thread which he passed over them, and secured the ends of the thread to the sides of the table with pins. It was delicate work, requiring a quick eye and steady hand to prevent the studs from being moved in the slightest degree from over the A. Then, with a pair of compasses, he experimented until he succeeded in finding a central point equally distant from each of the three corners. As he twirled the instrument round and round at last to make assurance doubly sure that he had indeed found the centre of the triangle, he saw that the point of the dividers which rested upon the map was drilling a little hole just in the centre of a small island in the great river. This, then, was the object of his search. Without the single dot on the stud obtained so adroitly from Miss Ettlinger he never could have found the right island. He carefully noted the location and surroundings of this island, its distances from the mouths of tributary rivers and other points defined on the map. He felt confident, after a careful inspection of the

locality which he had pierced with one point of his dividers, that he should be able to find it in his boat expedition up the river. He then placed in the pocket of his greatcoat the parchment map, the dividers, and the three enamelled studs. Thus it appeared that the White Mask and the detective employed by the Rev. Henry Morgan had been influenced by different motives in their efforts to gain possession of the three studs. One desired to use them as the key to the identification of an island in a South American river. The other looked to them as a valuable link in a chain of evidence leading to the identification of a murderer, the man who in the wind storm at night had deprived of life the unknown who was buried near the gate of the manor. The clergyman had given the detective the single stud in order that he might follow up and identify Hartwell as the murderer of the unknown at the manor gate. This duty the detective was faithfully pursuing even after he had been notified that Hartwell himself had disappeared under the strongest suspicions of foul play. No matter if the murderer of the unknown had himself been murdered, the trail must not be abandoned which seemed to be leading so directly to the person of Hartwell. The clergyman's suspicions seemed to be well founded that Hartwell had slain the unknown. The detective had ascertained that Miss Ettinger's father had disappeared just at the time the clergyman had heard the death-struggle under the trees. He learned also that her father, when he vanished from the sight of men, was known to have on his person a large amount of money. From the night that the unknown fell murdered near the manor gate, Hartwell's success in life dated. He never had been poor since the murder. He had been always poor before that murder. The enamelled studs seen upon Hartwell's shirt-bosom were the mates of the one found near the murdered unknown. The studs worn by Nathan Ettinger when he disappeared, his daughter had declared to be exactly like the one given to the detective by the clergyman. The device upon the three enamelled studs was so unusual and peculiar, and in appearance they were so exactly

alike in every respect, that the detective department were undoubtedly warranted in believing firmly that the three were one complete set. First, then, in the order of facts and time, Nathan Ettinger, the wealthy banker, had disappeared, wearing three Arabic studs, and with a large sum of money upon him. The next appearance of this Arabic character was upon one stud found by the clergyman near the body of the murdered unknown. Later, the same clergyman saw upon the bosom of Hartwell's shirt the other two of the set, and the third stud-hole in Hartwell's shirt-bosom was unoccupied by a stud. These facts, in connection with Hartwell's sudden wealth, were in the possession of the detective and had been for several months, while Arthur Delancy's fate was still undecided in the criminal court. And now an additional and important fact had come to light, which Miss Ettinger was already cognizant of, viz., that a man had visited her house with two studs of the set and had walked out of her house with all three of the set complete. On the following day the detective visited her, and learned this additional history of the three studs, and that some man unauthorized by him, had been using his name to gain possession of the single stud, and had deceived Miss Ettinger utterly as to his true character. Who had misled her thus? What was his motive? These were the natural queries put by the detective to himself. Another question arose in his mind also. How did this stranger know that a detective was upon the trail of the murderer of the unknown? He had written upon the card he had sent up to Miss Ettinger: "*The detective* is too ill to call."

How could this stranger have known that Miss Ettinger was interested in the services of a detective? Years had flown since the disappearance of her father, and the public had forgotten the affair as a hopeless mystery. The detective knew that his office was devoid of traitors. He knew also that Rev. Henry Morgan had communicated the secret of the single stud and his suspicions, and the employment of a detective, to Miss Delancy and her cousin Markham alone. He knew that the clergyman had pledged Markham to silence upon his honor as

a gentleman ; that he had pledged Miss Delancy also to perfect silence, with the simple exception that she might tell her grandmother, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, from whom she never concealed anything. The detective, after reflecting upon these facts, pronounced to himself the decision. "The only person not pledged to conceal the clergyman's facts, suspicions, and employment of a detective, is that old lady. No outsider could know that Miss Ettinger had any interest in a detective calling upon her unless Mrs. Jourdan Delancy has let out the secret that a detective is at work, and that the murdered unknown at the manor gate is supposed to be the lost Hebrew banker." The more he reflected upon it, the more assured did he feel that the mysterious man who had deceived Miss Ettinger, and carried off the three studs, could never have used the word *detective* on his card unless the grandmother of Miss Delancy had betrayed to some person the clergyman's line of action. Had the old lady betrayed it to the holder of the three studs directly, or had it reached him indirectly through her indiscretion ? Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was the only person unpledged to silence. The probability was that the business had leaked out through her ; that through her indiscretion in talking, or through her secret motives, the detective department was being thwarted and crossed in its efforts to trace the murder of the banker to Hartwell. The detective had read the testimony in the Arthur Delancy trial, and suspected, in common with many others, that if Arthur Delancy was the murderer of Hartwell, Mrs. Delancy must know something about the affair. But what earthly reason could the old lady have for crossing or impeding in any way the trail that led or appeared to lead to Hartwell, her enemy, as the murderer of the unknown buried now near the manor gate ? Or was it only her indiscretion in talking about the detective, which had been repeated by others, and thus finally reached the man who had deceived Miss Ettinger and walked off with the three Arabic studs ? Who could this possessor of the three studs be ? This last interrogatory became the worry by day and by night of this faithful detective. The

reader knows that he was the White Mask ; the same man to whom Mrs. Jourdan Delancy had flung a bag of gold from the window of the manor-house, and the same man who had lifted that white bag, so long and so stiff, to the shoulders of his horse, and then ridden away to the river side through the snow. Who was he? Who was *that* man?

While the detective was speculating upon his identity, the individual himself was safely on board the southern-bound ship, and was speeding out of the harbor towards the broad ocean. Two emotions were uppermost in this singular being's heart as he sat upon a coil of rope wrapped in his greatcoat and watching the receding shores of the harbor. They were exultation and gratitude ; gratitude to the man who, at the hazard of his own life, had saved the life of the White Mask ; exultation at the thought that the long-sought studs were at last all in his possession. He had wasted time, and resorted to many intrigues, and run great hazards to gain possession of the three little circles of gold. With patience and indomitable will he had pursued his plans, and was now receiving the reward of persistent effort. Success was at last within his grasp. That parchment map had been his dream by night, his perplexity by day. It could not be deciphered without the studs. Some occult and profound value attached to the map, and that mystery he was resolved to solve. Faint glimmerings of its intrinsic power had been revealed to him, and had stimulated him to untiring activity. At last, after successive triumphs over obstacles which would have deterred and intimidated most men, this iron man, this cool and deliberate night rider, this impersonation of will untrammelled by principle, had grasped the coveted studs into one hand and the initiatory key of the mystery was his own. As he sat so silently watching the receding shores, reticent, alone, incomprehensible to the seamen and officers about him, his eye was brilliant as an eagle's. It was the brilliancy of triumph, triumph long delayed, triumph which seemed to be self-existent, and to need no sustaining help from the hand of God. Upon laws human and divine had this great individual will tram-

pled, and if a conscience had ever whispered to him it whispered not to him now. Every moral consideration was under his feet, and he was exultant in the wonderful mastery of will. He was alone, self-sustained, heroic, sublime, omnipotent at least in his own estimation. There had been a time in the years long gone when he had credited the fables regarding a great and overruling Deity who would hold mortals to a rigid account for deeds done in the body. Those illusions of youth, grafted on to the mind by the superstitious teachings of parents and priests, he had long ago shaken off. He had abandoned belief in the supernatural, the spiritual, and had devoted himself to the exclusive pursuit of the material. He scorned the trivial successes of his fellow-men, and aspired, nay, more, determined to win an altitude in the material which no man had even dared to dream of.

Thus royally crowned with will, for will is royal, even though perverted, the solitary, reticent, and resolute White Mask meditated upon triumphs already gained and greater triumphs yet to come. In the midst of his reflections, he was interrupted by a catastrophe. A sailor was seized aloft with convulsions, lost his hold upon the spar, and fell almost directly to the deck beside him. The poor fellow was taken up by the White Mask and a couple of seamen, borne to a couch, and upon an examination was found to have fractured his leg. The captain expressed his regret that the services of a skilful surgeon were not at hand.

"I am a surgeon," said the White Mask calmly. "Leave him to my care and that of these two sailors; I will bring the poor fellow out all right."

The directions instantly issued by this stranger, and the knowledge he at once exhibited of the character of the fracture, obtained for him immediate recognition of his scientific character. In a brief time the sailor's limb was reset, and he was pronounced in a fair way for recovery. The mysterious surgeon sprang at once to high favor in the ship, and during the remainder of the voyage all invalids came to him for relief. The term *non compos mentis* was not again applied to him by the crew.

CHAPTER XIV.

*"Then landed De Leon, the sailor,
Unfurled his old banner, and sung;
But he felt very wrinkled and withered,
All around was so fresh and so young.
The palms ever-verdant were blooming,
Their blossoms d'en margined the seas;
O'er the streams of the forests, bright flowers
Hung deep from the branches of trees."*

H. Butterworth.



HE shades of evening were gathering fast upon the waters, when the ship, which had safely crossed the tropical seas, quietly anchored in the great river. Through the twilight was seen the white sandy shore, and behind it a dense forest of luxuriant growth. The gentle breeze was wafting from the shore the fragrance of flowers and aromatic shrubs, and the soft melody of countless nightingales floated over the placid waters. Then the darkness fell deeper for a few moments, only to be cheered again by the countless stars, which seemed, in their large, luminous, and wonderful brilliancy, to hang lower towards the earth than in northern climes. With the fall of the evening dew the air seemed to take on a heavier burden of fragrance from the shores, and to the mariners, so long weary and tempest-tossed, this calm and odoriferous atmosphere, and these sleeping waters, seemed to typify the presence of the approaching Elysium. When the full moon at length sailed up above the forest, and its splendor began to trace a luminous path across the tranquil waters, the stranger, who had aroused so much interest and speculation on board the vessel, signified his intention to leave his fellow-voyagers and proceed on his solitary expedition up the river. His boat was accordingly attached to the davits and freighted with the chest, the tent, and his other property, and, together with himself, who sat on the middle seat grasping his oars, was slowly lowered into the water. He cast off the ropes which had lowered him, and bidding the crew farewell,

bent to his oars and glided swiftly up the stream. They watched him for a long time as he pulled away in the moonlight, and exchanged ominous hints as to his final fate. Farther and farther away moved the mysterious adventurer. At last they lost sight of the glittering wake of the boat, and then they saw him no more. Everything was placid, beautiful, and fragrant in the tropical scene, and the sailors stretched themselves at ease upon the deck to await the advent of the coming day.

Alone, in unfamiliar waters, and ignorant of what perils awaited him by flood or field, the mysterious and the dauntless pulled steadily and vigorously at his oars. The moonlight was friendly, and exhibited to him the outlines of the shore near which the ship had anchored. The opposite bank of the river was invisible, so many miles wide was the great stream at this locality. Innumerable stars were above him, and amongst them he beheld, for the first time in his life, the famous constellation of the "Southern Cross." All nature was wrapped in profound repose. The hush of the evening was only broken by the distant notes of the nightingales and the grating of his oars upon the gunwale of the boat. But at length, after two hours of unremitted toil at his oars, he discovered a tributary stream flooded by the moonbeams, and gliding outward to a junction with the great river upon whose bosom he was moving. He turned the prow of his boat towards the tributary, and soon discovered that the shore of the junction was approaching. The voices of the night birds grew louder, and then he heard the distant howling of prowling jaguars. The fragrance of flowers grew more overpowering, and the outline of the unbroken forests showed more distinctly in the moonlight. Nearer and nearer came the shores, and he began to catch glimpses of the openings between the enormous trees through which the brilliant moonbeams seemed to fall like silver mists. The white sands of the beach were now close at hand, and glimmered softly in the wondrous light. The *luxuriant shrubbery* seemed silver-edged by the moonbeams, and

beyond it he saw openings in the forest flooded with light, vague vistas of brightness and shadow, from which delicious perfumes seemed to float out towards him, suggesting the presence of Fairy-land and its trooping, graceful elves. Was the solitary boatman indeed approaching the enchanted realm? He rested upon his oars for a moment, so bewildering and weird was the strange spectacle. Then seeing that his boat was floating down with the current, he recollected himself, and pulled in steadily for the bright beach, touched it with his keel, sprang ashore, and hauled his boat high and dry upon the sands. He was alone in the midst of the most luxuriant growth of trees and flowers he had ever known. Around him were novel and delicious odors, and forest vistas glorious as dreams. A little cascade was falling directly before him from the rocks, in successive sheets of fluttering silver, and the countless nightingales seemed to sing him a gentle welcome from the shrubbery. Towering high above the surrounding trees were singular species of palms, whose feathery branches seemed to incline downward like umbrella-tops. The interstices of the trees were laced together with luxuriant vines, and from them nodded faintly, in the voluptuous breeze, fragrant flowers, whose white and varied hues showed strangely in the moonlight. The bewildered explorer gazed long upon the novel witchery of the tropical scene. Then, weary and drowsy in the narcotic odors about him, he sank to the earth, and slept a long, delicious sleep, fanned by the luscious breeze, and nodded to by the sympathetic flowers which slept around him.

When he awoke the nocturnal birds had ceased their songs, and the birds of the day were merrily singing through the forest. Presently, with a sudden flood of brightness, the tropical day awoke. He raised himself from the ground, and gazed upon the most gorgeous scene of coloring and luxuriant foliage upon the face of the whole earth. Nature seemed to have lavished upon this favorite shore her choicest gifts, her richest hues. In the foreground of the wonderful painting was the

immense expanse of the Amazon, glittering in the sun. Beside it was a border of the richest emerald woods, upon whose mantle of green the flowers seemed to cling like clustered stars. From the shady recesses of the forest tributary brooks were winding their way out to the embrace of the king of rivers ; and over each stream, as it widened out its arms to greet the monarch of waters, scarlet and golden flowers were nodding from the banks, and palm-trees, with their tall stems, and feather-like branches, were waving salutations. Strange and magnificent vegetation greeted the eyes of the adventurer wherever he turned. Plants of curious form, and bushes teeming with flowers, groves of orange-trees, guava, bacata, and ruby-tinged cashew trees, seemed to crowd everywhere for a glimpse at their monarch river.

The man in the rough garb of a sailor, the adventurer devoid of fear, the being with the will of iron, the night rider who had flung the white bag with its stiffening contents into a northern stream, the cultivated surgeon, the intellectual sceptic, who sneered at the idea of immortality, now stood eagerly gazing upon the most sublime spectacle of the realistic that he had dared to dream of. Materialism was his god. Here was its most gorgeous manifestation. Here was a magnificent world, a beauty-crowned wilderness, a creation of sublimity, richness, variety, sensuousness, which had been its own creator. Here could he live, decay, and die, and spring to life again in the form of vegetation, or bird, or beast. In the flight of ages he might, according to his materialistic creed, develop into man again. But this solitary being was gifted with a transcendent appreciation of the beautiful. He revelled in this manifestation of recreating matter. Its visions, its dream-like luxuriance, its fragrant, soft, balmy atmosphere, and its lone magnificence aroused all the enthusiastic dormant in him. He was thrilled by the exquisite harmony and symmetry near him, and the vague outlines of the beauty which stretched away in the dim distance. He shouted in exultation, and his voice startled a group of scarlet flamingoes that were slowly pacing the white

sands of the shore in quest of their daily food. A solitary cocoa-nut was shaking its plume-like branches in the sweet-scented breeze, a short distance from him, and a flock of golden orioles, that had been holding a morning conference in its top, flew away at the sound of his voice. Higher lifted the ardent sun above the forests, and a flood of light poured over the sylvan landscape. He saw the dew glittering like myriad jewels on the edges of the leaves. The insects darted through the slanting pencils of rays, and gorgeous-plumed birds commenced to flutter their way amid their favorite groves. A brilliant toucan alighted upon a branch near him, and basked in the sunlight. Two silver-gray monkeys chased each other through the tree-tops, chattering in their wild play, and near him green and golden-hued lizards were in the grass, and turning every instant their brilliant coats to the sunlight. Gray parrots, with scarlet tufts, were glancing at the intruder sidewise, and macaws, with long tails, beautifully marked with blue and gold, were enjoying the morning sun in the same groves with roseate spoonbills. So pure was the air, so voluptuous with the incense of countless flowers, that it was a luxury to breathe. Out upon the broad, glistening bosom of the Amazon, in one direction, was a labyrinth of fairy islands, and to this point the explorer now turned the prow of his boat, as it was in the direction of his day's journey. Reluctantly he shoved the boat off from the white sands of the shore, and pulled away for the islands up the river. After a steady pull against a strong current for two hours, he reached the group of foliage-crowned islands, and entered one of the channels between them. The drooping foliage at length met in an arch of tropical magnificence above his head, and everywhere flowers hung over him, exhaling their sweetness upon the air. The sunbeams struggled in, and the birds sang overhead. Dense thickets lined the shores of the islands, and groves of bamboo stretched out into the water. Shining kingfishers were perched upon dry stems, standing out of the flood, and snow-white egrets moved majestically along the beach, proud of their delicate shape and lovely

plumage. The sounds of the oars grating upon the sides of his boat seemed the only discordant notes in this dream of Paradise, and he turned occasionally around to look behind him in the direction he was rowing, to see if he was not indeed about to intrude upon the presence of some fairy queen.

At last the tortuous channel was passed between the luxuriant islands, and he emerged into a sheet of water, which seemed like a broad, open lake, so far away from its centre seemed to retire the emerald islands which encircled it. It was the semblance of a lake in the middle of the Amazon. He pulled boldly across it, startling from their play upon its surface countless water-fowl, which arose into the air and fled away up the river. The whole superb expanse of the apparent lake was rippled by a gentle breeze, and glittering like a diamond mantle in the sun. He had espied directly before his boat, and up the river, a huge palm-tree on an island, and for this point he was now urging his prow forward. It was a broad sheet of water he was traversing, and his morning toil had already fatigued him, but he was determined to gain the solitary palm-tree before he would go ashore again for rest and refreshment. Higher ascended the tropical sun, and the heat, combined with his hearty tug at the oars, soon exhausted his remaining strength, and a sigh of relief escaped him when his keel finally grated on the beach of the island, where stood his landmark, the lofty palm. He was overcome by the heat and exercise, and after dragging his boat up the strand, he seated himself upon the ground, with his back resting against the huge tree, and surveyed the wide expanse of the apparent lake, and its distant or adjacent islands. Brilliant parasites of every color were visible amid the verdure around him, and upon an adjacent island he discovered grotesque plants of mammoth size, from which birds chattered, and to which scarlet flowers seemed to cling. The strand before him was hard, and composed of the finest white sand. The water which washed the shore was so transparent that white pebbles could be seen at a depth of many feet. The mimic waves, tinged with the sunlight, washed

gently upon the sands before him. Gold and silver fish were sporting in the water ; and after he had rested sufficiently, he opened his chest, and took from it a fishing net and an axe. With the latter he cut down a bamboo which was standing in the edge of the water, and then affixed his scoop net to it, and proceeded to secure some of the fish for his breakfast. In a few minutes he was eminently successful, and a dozen of the graceful swimmers were floundering upon the shore. He kindled a fire with driftwood which he found upon the island, cleaned his fish, and spread them upon a little gridiron which his forethought had placed in the chest. The fish proved to be very savory, and with the addition of sea-biscuit and brandy produced from his chest, he breakfasted heartily. His spirits seemed to rise with the termination of his morning meal, and, after a long reverie, he said aloud :

"The first act of the drama is played, and well played. If the alligators do not feed upon me, and the jaguars and serpents pass me unmolested, I will grapple with the problem of the unknown."

At this instant he sprang from the ground, where he was seated, to his feet, and taking the axe which was resting against the palm-tree levelled a blow at one of the most beautiful, and at the same time one of the most revolting creatures he had ever seen. It was a successful attack, and the reptile, three feet in length, was cut in two. It was a coral snake, regularly banded with alternate rings of black, scarlet, and yellow, the two latter hues being of singular brilliancy.

"It is an omen of my success," he exclaimed, as the halves of the reptile writhed in death agony before him. "So perish all the foes that stand in the way of my purpose in this great Brazilian wilderness. Aye ! so have perished all my foes. What a patient, determined, remorseless demon I am ! *Success !* I'll have it, and when I return to the grapple with intellect, I'll rule it and put it under my feet."

As the White Mask concluded he flung the axe into his boat, gathered up his utensils of cooking and sporting, and tossed

them into his chest, and then bringing out his parchment map and the Arabic studs, seated himself in the shade of the palm to refresh his memory of localities from the inspection of these mystic guides. For a long time he was occupied thus. He seemed to be in no hurry to take advantage of the daylight to pursue his journey. When at length his inspection of the map had seemed to afford him all the information of the great territory of Para he desired, he stowed away the map and studs in his chest, and proceeded to bring forth his rifle and ammunition. He was desirous of consuming time, and intended to resume his journey a few hours only before nightfall. In a strange and apparently solitary wilderness, he knew that he was not remote from the haunts of human beings. The city and port of Para was just above him on the river, and he was anxious to pass that port at night and unseen of men. He had not long to wait for game on the island. As he roved about with his rifle he saw a reddish-brown paca, of the size of a large rabbit, hurrying away through the bushes. A well-directed rifle-ball laid the singular-looking creature dead before him. At the sound of his gun flocks of water-fowl arose into the air on every side of the island, and flew away over the apparent lake. It was evident that he could not starve in his river expedition if his ammunition held out. Soon a comical-looking creature moved away through the shrubbery. The animal had a sharp pointed head and a banded coat of mail, from which the rifle-ball he fired at it glanced off as if from the back of a tortoise. The creature succeeded in escaping from the hunter by taking to an impenetrable undergrowth. It was the armadillo. After traversing the island, and securing for his larder a dozen gold-colored ducks, which he shot from a large flock which had apparently selected this locality for their summer home, he returned to his boat and replenished the fire upon the shore. Then he skinned and cooked the paca, and upon tasting the meat found that it was as white and tender as that of a chicken. He dressed and cooked the ducks, placing them afterwards in *his boat* for use upon the journey.

Finding, at last, that the sun had passed the zenith, and was commencing to lower towards the western horizon, he arranged everything in his boat, and bade this locality farewell. Then bending to his oars he skirted the shores of the island and found that he was once more upon the open and unobstructed river. A broad glistening sheet of water extended for miles away before him, and over its tranquil expanse he urged his boat, trusting to his skill as an oarsman to reach and pass the city of Para just after nightfall. Hours passed by and still the powerful arms relinquished not their efforts at the oars, but held steadily at their task. Far away on his right stretched the verdure-crowned bank of the tropical river. Far away on his left was the broad sheet of the Amazon, apparently shoreless on the west. Three hundred years had elapsed since Orellana had first discovered this king of waters, and held on his triumphant way to the Eastern ocean, to carry the news to the monarch of Spain. Now a human will as indomitable and persistent as his own was ascending the river, perhaps with as hopeful dreams of finding the mysterious "El Dorado" as ever filled the imaginations of the Spanish explorers. On, on, glided the boat, and the even-toned, monotonous grating of the oars upon the gunwale seemed to come as regularly and ominously as the footfalls of destiny. Would the silent man never weary of his search? Would the strong arms never relax their labor? Would this mysterious being, uncheered by a companion's voice, alone, impenetrable, determined, hold on his way into ever-recurring solitudes and wildernesses, tenanted only by wild beasts and serpents? Did he know what perils awaited him beyond Para, when he should place behind him the last hope of human succor, and push his boat on into unexplored wilds, where only one white man had ever penetrated before him, and that one the maker of the mysterious map which lay in his boat? He did not know what dangers awaited him, save from analogy. The great, broad Amazon proper had been partially explored, and its wonders made evident to men. But the southern branch of the river, designated as "The Para River," for the

sake of distinction, had never been explored to its source, save by the hardy Hebrew adventurer who drew the map, and concealed the details of his discoveries from all except a chosen few. Nathan Ettinger had become the heir of the knowledge gained by his ancestor. He had owned the map and the Arabic studs, but had never possessed the nerve and indomitable hardihood and will to seek these Brazilian solitudes, and test the accuracy of the secret traditions regarding the upper waters of "The Para River." Strange rumors had been whispered about among the Hebrew bankers of London and New York, for many years, that one of their faith had penetrated the province of Para for hundreds of miles, and brought away wonderful intelligence of the richness and fertility of the upper banks of the Para river. Vague stories of mines, undeveloped wealth, and all the exaggerations of an unbridled fancy, had been circulated by successive generations of a Hebrew family, who were only vaguely cognizant of an old tradition that their ancestor had there discovered wonders. But in the hands of Nathan Ettinger, the banker, had centred all the real information upon the subject. His father had given him the map and the Arabic studs with the tradition that his ancestor had found in the locality, where the centre of the triangle was marked upon the map, most valuable mines, and that whoever would dare encounter the perils of the solitary voyage, and succeed in returning to the haunts of men, would be richly rewarded for the venture. The banker, Nathan Ettinger, was gone, none knew where. Faint light was at last breaking upon the mind of his daughter and of the detective that indicated foul play regarding the lost Hebrew. The studs had been heard of at last, all in the possession of one man. Who was he? The White Mask, known to the readers in a measure, but utterly unknown to the detective. He was a mysterious being who had gained possession of the map, of the two Arabic studs, once seen in the shirt-bosom of Hartwell, of the single stud, once held by the clergyman, and who now, by the aid of the bag of gold flung to him by Mrs. Jourdan Delancy on the night following

the murder for which Arthur Delancy had been tried, was vigorously pushing his explorations up to the head-waters of the unknown Para river, the southern branch of the river of the Amazons.

Before the shades of evening fell upon the waters he saw before him the safe, picturesque, and beautiful harbor of Para. At this city the river is four miles wide, and is thickly studded with islands. He saw the same exuberant growth of foliage upon these islands as upon the one he had last touched at. He rowed his boat under the shadow of one of this group, and going ashore, climbed into the top of a tree to watch the sun go down behind Para. From his lofty stand-point he could see the low and ancient-looking houses of stone in the city, its great, solid, ecclesiastical structures, and the ruins of buildings destroyed in the wars with the aborigines of the province, and now overgrown with luxuriant moss. The red roofs, the dingy walls, and the garden trees of the city, were plainly visible. Tall banana plants could be seen near to the dwellings, and on the nearest point of the shore he detected the venders of fruit moving along or grouped together with baskets of oranges, pineapples, and other tropical fruit.

At last the sun went down upon the scene, leaving a warm golden glow upon the western sky. The figures of the fruit-venders blended with the shadows, and he saw them no more. A feeling of loneliness came over the lone adventurer perched high above the mass of foliage on the harbor island. This he knew would be the last glimpse he would have of civilized men for many months. Perhaps it would be the last he would ever have. In the depths of the pathless wilderness he might find his grave, and no human being would ever know the name of the explorer who had died and been blown about as ashes, in the forest. No tombstone would indicate his exit from time. Perhaps in the coming ages some adventurer might rest his gun against him when he had grown up into a tropical tree. This thought brought a smile upon the grim features of the man, for his belief in the eternity of matter often raised ludicrous im-

ages in his mind. "If I fail," he said to himself, "I shall become a part of the Brazilian forest. If I succeed, I shall be a Northern king, and will force the most valuable trees of this wild Paradise to come northward to me. Their hard, polished wood shall become my seats, my couches, my floors, my cabinets. The explorer shall die under the trees to nourish their roots, or the trees shall die to grace his Northern home."

Not till the stars began to gleam in the cloudless sky, and to illumine with their mellow light the bewitching scene around him, did the man descend from the tree, and resume his seat in the boat. Concealed by the night, he glided across the harbor unseen, and passed gradually up the river, leaving the lights of Para behind him. He turned for one farewell glimpse at the last light which indicated the presence and activity of civilization, and then bent resolutely to his oars, forcing his way up to the unknown, the wild, the pathless wilderness. Patiently he tugged at his oars, and glided on under the favoring light of the great, low-hanging stars of the tropics. After a protracted and steady pull at the oars for two hours longer, he turned his prow toward the left shore to seek a harbor for the night. Just as he was about to land under the shrubbery, the moon arose with sudden brilliancy, and illumined the whole shore. At the point where his boat would have touched the land he saw a monster which opened his huge jaws at sight of him, and from that horrible cavity issued an enraged hiss. It was a huge alligator which had crawled up the beach preparatory to a moonlight stroll. The materialist had narrowly escaped, not transformation into a tropical tree, but the painful process of becoming a component part of a Brazilian alligator.

CHAPTER XV.

*"A painted boat with rusted prow ;
An old man bending at the bow,
With form so wasted, beard so grim,
The nether elf seems man to him,
And which the man, and which the elf,
Were e'en a riddle to himself."*

Francis Gerry Fairfield.

HIGH up in the wilderness of Para, where the confluent streams from the elevated lands unite and form the Rio Xingú, a weary, lone adventurer was seated upon a rock, and gazing hopelessly upward at a waterfall which, with one leap, cleared the rocks and fell seventy feet in foam into the river-bed below. On every side were cliffs, apparently inaccessible to human beings. The eye could find no footholds where the man might scale the heights and pursue his journey up the river. His boat had encountered many perils during its ascent of the Rio Xingú. For hundreds of miles it had held its prow boldly up into hostile currents, and amid rocks sunken and prominent. Huge alligators had dashed their hard, scaly backs against its sides, and its wood-work was dented in many places by their blows. Once a black tiger, wounded and frantic, had turned from the cliffs and sprung into the boat for revenge ; but the measure of his success was indicated by a dark, glossy fur which was now stretched upon the seat in the stern of the boat, and which the adventurer was wont to use for a pillow. Sunken rocks had traced their furrows across the keel, and floating *snags* had thundered under the prow, and still the little boat, fashioned and bound together by master mechanics, had withstood all assaults, and was a safe boat still.

But now its upward course was checked. It had surmounted rapids, but the waterfall was the final and effectual barrier to its advance. Here the boat had become useless for the ascent of the river. It could never be hauled up over the cliffs to the river above. It must be abandoned. The exhausted adven-

turer realized the fact, and had already selected a spot under the cliffs, a sort of half-cavern with a rock roof, where he intended to shelter his boat until his return from the upper waters of the Rio Xingú. His resolution was unbroken by exhaustion and hardship. There was a deep well of fiery will within him yet. Obstacles to his purpose were accumulating, and in their appalling face he was looking steadily, earnestly, unflinchingly. The sailor's costume in which he had clothed his limbs was nearly all rotted away from his body by rain and tropical heat, or torn into tatters by thorns and jagged rocks amid which he had hunted for the game which had sustained in part his life. The remnants of his wretched garb clung feebly to his sinewy frame, and he knew it would not sustain another grapple with the high rocks before him, which had marked the limit between navigable and unnavigable with rigid certainty. His sailor's "*tarpaulin*" hat still proved serviceable for a covering, even after his months and months of exposure. But it was the only article of clothing which would be of any further use to him. His boots had long since worn out, and been discarded. He was barefooted in a wilderness full of serpents and venomous insects.

After a long and anxious examination of the cliffs which stood athwart his way, he cast his eyes over the wretched rags which clung still to his limbs. He decided at once that he could proceed no farther up the head-waters of the Rio Xingú without replenishing his wardrobe. He therefore drew his boat, after unloading it, close up under the shelter of the cliffs, and into the semi-cave. Here, also, he found a projection of the rocks which would shelter his person from the tropical rains. This was a fortunate discovery, for the fearful torrents of water peculiar to the clime had already commenced to fall at intervals from the skies, and while they continued to fall no human being could endure their merciless peltings. He had already crawled on several occasions under the banks of the river to escape their violence. But there was one other horror of the tropics that made him crave shelter more than the

blinding torrents of rain. It was the hurricane, that remorseless uprooter of magnificent trees and savage spoliator of gigantic vegetation. He had witnessed one demonstration already of the tropical tornado, and flat upon his face, under a huge monarch of the forest, had awaited the death which seemed inevitable. He had been saved, and from that hour a nervous anxiety to be ever near the shelter of rocks and crags possessed him. Here by the waterfall was an effectual protection from the devastating gale, so long as he found it necessary to tarry; and accordingly he stowed away everything under the overhanging rocks, and proceeded then to catch with his scoop-net the blue and yellow fish he saw in the river for his dinner. The water was alive with these novel and palatable swimmers, and ere long there were a dozen of them broiling over his fire. His brandy had been exhausted for months, and now he drank only the river water, which had become clearer and purer the higher he ascended the Rio Xingú.

After his repast was finished, he proceeded to fashion garments for himself which would enable him to penetrate still farther into the wilderness. He had brought needles and thread in his chest; and he soon cut out and made into breeches the black tiger's skin which lay in the stern of his boat. There was material enough left after this feat to make himself shoes from the remnants of the fur. These were soon made by the man who never tired of experiments, and believed in the omnipotence of will. He toiled for the greater part of two days to make these two articles of wear perfect protectors against the perils of climate and of travel. When he had completed them, he stood up in the pride of success, and surveyed himself. With the exception of the seaman's hat, he was naked to the waist. From the waist down to the tips of his toes, he was all black tiger's fur. His breast, and arms, and brawny shoulders were exposed to the climate in the fashion of the aborigines of Brazil. Armed with his rifle, and axe, and hunting-knife, he was now prepared to abandon the journey by

water, and fight his way up the river through the tangled vines, the prowling beasts, and the gliding reptiles of the shore.

He was aroused one morning from sleep by the terrific combat of two spotted jaguars upon the fallen trunk of a huge tree which had been uprooted in some former sweep of the hurricane. The scene of the conflict was just across the narrow river, and opposite to the semi-cave where he had stowed away his boat. For an instant he was tempted by the proximity of the combatants, and the fair chance for deliberate aim which the openings in the vegetation on the opposite shore afforded, to slay one of the frantic beasts. But this expenditure of ammunition would be useless, and he could only gain by it the skin of a jaguar. So he resisted the temptation, and saved the bullet for better and more useful game on the river above him. Every charge of powder and every ball were becoming daily more precious to him than gold. But he watched the desperate conflict, which continued with unabated fury in the top of the fallen tree. He could see the streaks of blood upon the combatants, drawn at every stroke of their terrible claws, and the glitter of their white fangs, as they howled at each other, and then closed again in a fearful embrace. The smaller branches of the fallen top were snapped under their struggling forms, and then, with a half-smothered snarl, they closed in a final death-grapple, burying their fangs in each other's necks. For another instant they were visible, turning over and over like a huge ball of fur, and then they suddenly fell from the trunk of the tree on to the ground beyond it. Instantly piercing yells arose from both jaguars. Their forms were concealed from the amazed spectator by the dense foliage of the undergrowth. Presently he saw one of them spring to the upright trunk of a tree, ascend it, and then pause in its top, looking down, and uttering fearful yells, which soon elicited the cries of other and distant beasts of the forest. Soon the whole woods seemed alive with startled screams of bird and beast. The mystery was speedily solved, for the remaining jaguar made his appearance. With one bound he regained the trunk of the tree

from which he had fallen, but with a fearful addition to his weight. A huge green serpent was twined about his neck, and striking its fangs at his face, while a dozen snakes of the same hue were twisting up through the branches to hasten to the attack. The jaguars had fallen into a den of the reptiles, and the whole tribe were hissing in rage, and swiftly pursuing the encumbered jaguar. His death-struggle was prolonged but a few moments. The serpents fell upon him with their fangs from every direction, dragged him finally from the trunk, and he was seen no more; the jaguar in the tree above him, and some black monkeys, which had occupied the adjacent branches, keeping up a fearful din, while the serpents made an end of their beleaguered foe upon the ground. The whole vicinity seemed to be alive, also, with the hisses of the reptiles. They showed themselves everywhere upon the branches of the fallen tree, and upon the neighboring trunks, and writhed in horrible contortions over the broad leaves of the tropical shrubbery. Some of them even made their way down to the water's edge, and raised their heads threateningly to the man on the opposite shore. But the river was evidently the boundary of their realm, and they could not or would not swim across. Satisfied at last that he was safe from attack on his side of the river, the White Mask contemplated the excited scene more complacently, and with a species of fascination. A shudder came over him, iron-hearted as he was, while he watched the fearful rage and contortions of the green reptiles. What would have been his own fate had he chanced to land on that side of the stream? But as he gazed upon the battle-field of the beasts, and his eyes roved up and down the opposite bank, he saw that some of the serpents retired early from the scene of the conflict. Possibly their services were no longer required. Possibly they were philosophic reptiles, and had determined to run away, that they might live to fight another day. But whatever the motives for their retirement up the river, some of them were certainly moving away from the field, and approaching the impassable cliff from which the waterfall was tumbling out into space.

Finally, keeping his eyes fixed upon one of them, he saw it mount the trunk of a gigantic tree. Another and another followed it, until the top seemed alive with their writhing, loathsome, green majesties. Then the ringleader, or chief of the reptiles, led the way from that tree top into the branches of the adjacent tree, and thus they all finally moved on, from tree-top to tree-top, until they reached the face of the cliff. The trees were of such altitude that they were level with the top of the waterfall; and by this route did they reach finally the summit of the cliff, and disappear over its edge. The key of the position was thus revealed to the fur-clad explorer. If the serpents could climb trees and proceed up the river, why could not a man, with rifle, axe, and knife? He saw at once that the problem of advance up the Rio Xingú was solved without resort to the circuitous route he had contemplated, to avoid the cliffs, and regain the river miles above. "Be ye wise as serpents," he said to himself, exultantly. "The Old Book of Scriptural fables has something of truth in it after all. I will follow the lesson of the serpents, but upon this side of the river. I do not fancy travelling in such company."

When he had completed his arrangements, and secured upon his person the map and studs which had been the great cause of his expedition, he hung the rifle, axe, and hunting-knife over his shoulder by a cord made of the tiger skin. His ammunition was secured about his waist. Thus equipped, he abandoned his boat and chest for a time, and commenced to climb one of the huge trees nearest to the cliff. The tree he had selected was favorable to his purpose, having many strong and regularly placed limbs. By the aid of these he slowly toiled upward, and after resting many times, he succeeded in reaching the top of the tree. Here he found at last a branch strong enough to sustain his weight, and which extended outward far enough to rest upon the rocks near the summit. He passed along this branch upon his hands and knees until he reached the rocks. After a brief trial of several natural steps in the cliff, he found one pair of stairs which finally led him to the summit, where he

saw again the serene flow of the river above the falls. The Rio Xingú was full of little islands at this locality, each one rich in its mass of foliage and flowers. But no sooner had he commenced to ascend the bank of the stream than he discovered that his path was crossed by luxuriant vines, through which he had to cut his way with his long hunting-knife. His progress was slow and tedious, and when the daylight faded away he felt that he had made a very poor day's journey, and was utterly exhausted by this new toil, so much more painful than his pull at the oars for several hundred miles had been. He fell upon the earth, and slept a heavy sleep. He dreamed that the object of his patient search had been reached. When he awoke, the day was far advanced, and new wonders of vegetation and coloring were on every side. The size and gorgeousness of the tropical flora seemed to increase the farther he penetrated into the wilderness. The surface of the river shone like a polished mirror, and, on projecting sand-bars he saw tall birds of splendid plumage, some entirely clad in scarlet feathers, and others white as snow. Halcyons of exceeding beauty darted from their coverts, and flitted along under the tangled masses of shrubbery which overhung the banks. Many small alligators were basking in the sun along the shore, and lazily retired into the water at sight of the explorer. A forest of cannon-ball trees was about him, and covered with clusters of fragrant blossoms. After building a fire upon the shore, and cooking some delicate slices of venison which he cut from a spotted red deer shot in the thicket, he resumed his advance up the river. He felt confident now of obtaining abundance of animal food. The deer were becoming more plenty. For the last fifty miles, according to his rough estimate of the way, these graceful creatures seemed to linger nearer to the river banks. The water was becoming quite shallow, and at certain points he saw troops of deer wading across the Rio Xingú. On and on, the indefatigable man pressed into the pathless woods. Looking back occasionally along the shores of the river, he became satisfied that the ground was rising rapidly towards the south-west, the direc-

tion of his march. He had provided himself with a miniature compass, and he was enabled by it to keep in view the general direction of the river. Deeper and deeper became now the twilight of the forest. Gigantic trees towered around, and were interlaced thickly with creeping vines. Strange shrubs of fantastic forms and huge dimensions lifted up their heads and broad shoulders on every side. Tens of thousands of splendid flowers glittered wherever the sunbeams fell. No greater gorgeousness could spring from the imaginations of poets than attached to this Brazilian flora.

After two weeks of daily travel above the falls, the river became so shallow that he could wade across it ankle deep. Finding that the scenery of the shore was rapidly becoming wilder, and the rocks bolder, he determined, after a careful inspection of his map, to seek some lofty point, and endeavor to gain a bird's-eye glimpse of the territory around him. The map had indicated country broken into rocky ravines, not far from the island which one point of his dividers had pierced in his original experiment with the studs and triangle. The long looked-for island had in the map appeared to be in a locality where the river seemed to connect a chain of lakes. He saw upon the map a mountain indicated in the same locality which the river flowed past, just after leaving the coveted island. He looked now eagerly day after day for this mountain. The country was surely rising day by day, and every hour he must be going higher above the level of the sea. At length, after a day of unwonted toil along the rocky shore, where dens of reptiles seemed to multiply with every mile of advance, he saw that he was indeed mounting up into the air. The acclivity was abrupt and painful, and though forest-crowned, was evidently the slope of a great hill. He had toiled a long way up its side, still keeping the shallow river in view through the trees, when suddenly the dark mantle of night was thrown over the scene. He built a huge fire to keep away prowling beasts and serpents, and laid down to sleep beside it. Dreams of the wonderful island, which had so long engrossed his thoughts,

and for which he had traversed hundreds of miles of solitary forest, and encountered countless perils, flitted over him, and the prize seemed to have passed at last into his exclusive possession. Dream succeeded dream, and he was once more an inhabitant of the frozen country where he had borne upon his steed by night the stiff and ominous contents of the long, white bag on and on through the snow to the coldly flowing river. Faces were beaming lovingly upon him, familiar faces, faces which had been known to him before danger and secrecy had become part of his daily life; before masks and midnights had become his protectors. The man of iron purpose, the defier of laws human and divine, the materialist, the sceptic, the self-sustained, had the tenderest of feelings for those he loved. There were faces of women in his dreams towards which his heart turned in gratitude. There was the face, too, of a man, noble, but sad from many sorrows. This face, sharply chiselled and intellectual, looked in often through his dreams, and whenever it appeared, the sleeper was exultant with the noblest of purposes. But the *island*, the *island*: that was ever present in the midnight visions, and he had gained it. His ambitions were accomplished. The plenitude of power was at last within his grasp. But so worn, weary, and footsore was he by his months of toil, that he slumbered on and on, and though hell had apparently broken loose around him, the confusion did not arouse him. It was only when a brand was lifted from his fire and flung upon his outstretched hand, that he sprang up to the realization of his peril. Through the horrible darkness the fragments of his scattered fire were flying wildly. Blazing brands were lifted into air and hurled high away among the branches. Sparks, red cinders, flaming sticks, and volumes of smoke were passing over him, and howls, whistlings, and crashings of timber, mingled with the screams of wild beasts and the hissing of frightened serpents. A huge tree was uprooted in an instant and flung headlong towards him, and from its top as it crashed to the earth a jaguar was flung full against his breast, bearing him to the earth. The frightened beast

made no effort to molest him, but ran howling away into the darkness of the thicket. Terror had supplanted every other instinct, and everything of life hid away in darkness and in holes among the rocks. The man arose to his feet, but was instantly hurled to the earth by the hurricane, and over him trees fell with a crash, burying him in their foliage. Over his prostrate body the fallen trunks were piled one above the other, and formed above him a wonderful screen, which protected him from further falling trees and uprooted shrubbery. A serpent glided across his body and left him unharmed. A frightened hare darted through the leafy screen and brushed his face as it fled away. Birds fell dead or fluttering around him, and then, with fearful crash, fell the bolts of red lightning into the forest. Crash after crash told how surely the great trunks were riven asunder, and the darkness alternated with broad gleams of fire. The howls of the tornado were fearful, the trunks of the trees being played upon as the strings of a mammoth lyre. The masses of shrubbery swayed back and forth in the light of the falling bolts, and then tearing away from their roots, flew away before the gale. Confusion, horror, darkness, light, thunderings, occupied all space, and the end of all things seemed at hand. So rapid is the growth of tropical trees, so high do they rise into the air in a few years, from the excessive richness of the soil, that they have no time to bed themselves firmly at the roots; and are an easy prey to the hurricane. They were falling now on every side, and the man under the protecting screen trembled with terror at each thundering fall, lest a heavier tree might crush down his screen upon him. Then burst over the appalling scene the torrents of tropical rain, coming like floods down upon the forests, each rill on the hill-side swelling to a torrent. The gathering waters upon the slope where the man lay hidden, poured down upon him, soaking his prostrate form with mud and water, so that he had to raise his head from the earth to escape suffocation. For an hour he lay trembling and wretched upon the earth, and in the confusion of the tempest apprehending that his last

hour had come. But the hurricane passed by. The sounds died away, and at length he heard only the dropping of the water which lingered upon the leaves. He remained quietly upon the ground until the day broke. It came at last with a sudden burst of splendor, filling the forest aisles with light, and causing the rain drops on the leaves to glitter like myriad jewels of every hue. The birds regained their courage, and came out one after another to greet the sun. Gradually their voices awoke in the solitude as they shook off the drops of water which fell upon them from the wet leaves. The morning light was glorious in its splendor, and the man who had awaited death in the gloom of the tornado, crawled out from his covert to hope once more. He found deer lying dead not far from his screen of trees. They had been crushed by the falling timber. He built a fire again, dried his garments, looked to the priming of his rifle, and then proceeded to cook a meal from the carcasses of the deer lying around him. His elasticity of spirits returned to him, his will was again rampant, and when he had breakfasted heartily, he was once more ready for the journey. He commenced then to ascend the wooded hill. The fallen trees were many, and over or under them he crawled until he found from indubitable signs that he was nearing the summit of the hill. It was near the hour of noon, when he discovered that his upward route would soon terminate in a sharp, rocky peak. Its cone was already well defined against the blue sky, and the forest-trees had receded from its rocky sides. He clambered eagerly up the broken ground, toiled from rock to rock, and at last stood upon the summit. A cry escaped him. It was the most superb vision of nature's wonders that had ever been granted to mortal man. He stood upon the apex of the mountain, grasping his rifle like a staff, and looking off in bewildered rapture.

CHAPTER XVI.

*"But, ah! what land was this he woke unto?
What joy was this that filled his heart anew?
Had he then gained the very Paradise?"*

Ogier, the Dane.

FOR hundreds of miles north, south, and west, the eyes of the amazed explorer roved over woods, waters, and mountains. The wonderful transparency of the atmosphere and the splendor of the mid-day sun gave a reach of vision at this altitude almost miraculous. He looked down upon miles of green woods stretching away beneath him with all the imposing magnitude of a verdant ocean. On, on, on, towards the west rolled the vast sea of verdure until it seemed to touch the sky. At the northwest were blue mountain peaks only a shade darker than that exquisite blue of the sky; and from the apex of some of them wreaths of smoke and fire were issuing, denoting their volcanic character. At the point the mountains seemed to rise from the sea of verdure an immense glittering line of water was visible, moving on in tortuous channels, and widening out towards the east. It was the unequalled, the vast, the glorious river of the Amazons. The great monarch of rivers seemed almost to divide a continent in twain as it moved on its majestic way, receiving the homage of pathless forests, upon whose mantles Queen Flora had strewn her most gorgeous hues. In the foreground was the chain of lakes, formed by the alternate widening and narrowing of the Rio Xingú, and the blue waters of these lakes were dotted with emerald isles. Far away on the southwest were immense plains covered with grass, upon which countless wild horses and cattle were roving in primitive freedom; and beyond this unexplored pasture-land of nature another range of mountains was visible, over whose shoulders looked still another range of peaks, some of which were snow-crowned, and others smoking with volcanic fires. Above a slender, spire-like mountain close at hand, a condor of the Andes was hovering at an immense altitude, and over the

tops of the adjacent forests below him the explorer saw the fluttering of many wings as the tropical birds rose and fell in their riotous play or soared away serenely on their journeys. Over the vast, dream-like spectacle was spread the blue canopy of heaven, unrelieved by clouds save in the far south, where white, downy masses of vapor seemed to sleep in the semblance of huge celestial temples of spotless white. From the near forests of tropical luxuriance at his feet the solitary man caught the tumultuous melody of countless songsters and the hoarse cries of savage beasts. The grand orchestra of nature seemed to rise from a wilderness of aromatic shrubs, gently fluttering palm branches, and the most gorgeous flora of creation. The flowering trees and shrubs were in full bloom. The azalia, the callicanthus, the quercus ilex, the laurus inquirians, the cornus florida, the Judas tree, the magnolia grandiflora, the dogwood, the hawthorn, the fringe-tree, dangling its flowers in the floating breeze, and the flowering vines, trembling as they bent to kiss the dimpling waters of the Rio Xingú, wafted up such fragrance to the god of day as erst ascended from the bowers of Eden ere man had fallen from his innocence.

And bright as a polished mirror flowed the river at the very feet of the bronzed and footsore wanderer, who had gained at last the gate of the terrestrial paradise, for gate it was beside the hill upon which he stood. Between his standpoint and the adjacent hill on the south was a rocky ravine opening into the paradise. Its sides were five hundred feet in height, and clothed in foliage of the richest hue and flowers of the brightest tints, which nodded gracefully to the river gliding through the pass, or dipped their fragrant heads for a glimpse into its enchanted mirror. The most imaginative transcendentalist in his dreams, and the most inspired poet of nature, never in Elysian reveries conceived visions so exquisite as these Brazilian realities. It seemed to the appreciative sense of the solitary explorer a meet reward for his months of toil and danger to be allowed to gaze upon the lone magnificence of so vast a panorama. Beauty and grandeur blended in never-ending variety.

How long had the majestic spectacle been in process of formation? Tumultuous fancies crowded upon him. Over the wastes of time his memory reverted to the ancient fables of creation. Once a man had stood in absolute loneliness and without a companion or mate, and, as if aroused from a death-sleep, had gazed upon a creation of which he was the sole ruler. Was not the allegory of creation repeated now? Was not he, solitary on his mountain peak, another Adam gazing upon a new world? Had not all his former life been only a dream? Was not he living, breathing, gazing in rapture for the first time upon a new Eden? To some men the exultation, the exaltation, the expanding thrill of gazing from a new and majestic altitude over the reaches of magnificent scenery, come like inspirations from Heaven. The soul, overpowered by emotions of delight, bows unconsciously to the power which with matchless skill has woven the details of the vision. So did he now, sceptic as he was, whisper to himself, "There may be a God, a Creator of all this, for in the vast spectacle there is harmony."

He sank upon the rock, and his rifle fell across his lap. A dreamy reverie stole over him as he gazed. His senses were fascinated. He felt like a ruler of the unexplored realm, so high did his throne seem to be lifted above it. Away, away to every point of the compass roved his eyes. The view was entrancing, and it was all his own. He might shout at the top of his lungs and not the faintest echo of his voice would reach to within hundreds of miles of civilization. Not even an aboriginal savage was upon the surface of his realm to contest with him for the supremacy. He was lord, master, sovereign, the first king and the last king of the wonderful, uninhabited, gorgeous, sublime kingdom. Was he the *first* king? No! the truth returned to his recollection. A man had penetrated once to this paradise and returned to men. Why? How could any human being relinquish such a domain to return to the selfish grapple with his fellows for gold, power, fame? How could he have abandoned the unlimited freedom of such a home for the

narrow walls of a civilized habitation, and for a life-struggle with men who might, in the excess of their artfulness, their skill, their traffic, wrest from him his property, his peace, his independence? What inducement of civilization could compensate for this sublime view, for this intoxicating atmosphere, for the exhilaration of this solitary ownership of all nature? And as he pondered the motives which must have actuated his solitary predecessor, a thrill passed over him. Yes! the mastery over mind was a grander mastery than that over nature. To rule intellect, and make it bow before him, was a greater triumph than to make the most exalted monarch of the Brazilian woods fall at the strokes of his axe. Mind craves victory over mind. To make the memory, the will, and the understanding bow in reverence, this is kingly triumph, and for this had the indomitable will that had braved the perils of the wilderness, and now sat regnant upon the rocky peak above the Rio Xingú, penetrated to this matchless region of verdure, this vast empire of beauty and grandeur.

As he sat, like a primitive, fur-clad king, revelling in the view, the memory of his predecessor and the memory of his own purpose returned to him, and he drew forth the parchment map to study it anew. He spread it open upon the rock beside him, and laid across its corners his rifle and hunting-knife to keep it open. As the details of rivers, mountains, and rocky passes were made once more manifest to him, he saw that he was indeed near to the object of his search. There, without the possibility of error, was the chain of lakes formed by the river which, after a flow of hundreds of miles, became a part of the huge Amazon. There were the lakes. On which of them was the island which had influenced the Hebrew to construct the map, and bear it through countless dangers to the far-off civilization? It seemed upon the map to be the second lake from him. The point of the dividers had pierced an island in the second lake. How far now would he have to penetrate the wilds to reach that lake? Was it shallow or deep? Could he reach the island by wading, or would it be necessary to fell a tree, and

from the trunk hollow out a canoe? He put away the map again, rose to his feet, and surveyed the chain of lakes. Perhaps that second serene sheet of blue water might be twenty miles away. But, be it near or far, he was determined to know its mysteries, and now was the time to march. So, after one more glimpse at the salient landmarks of the wilderness, he grasped his rifle, descended the mountain up which he had climbed, and sought the ravine at its base, through which flowed the river, and up which he must journey as through a gate, to the paradise beyond. When once more he was under the shadows of the forest upon the river bank, he found that the thickets were filled with game. Red deer started up at the sound of his feet, crushing down the twigs and vines, and with startled wonder opened their lustrous eyes upon man for the first time. Then with a bound they cleared the shrubbery, and vanished in the shadows. He saw exquisite fawns standing upon the river brink, and in its glassy surface gazing in wonder at their graceful likenesses. Hares, white, gray or red, pricked up their ears at him from the knolls, and then started off in their circuitous flight. Pheasants drew up their heads loftily to catch a glimpse at the stranger through the bushes, and then with a hollow *thrum* took to their wings and sped away to darker coverts. He had indeed penetrated to the hunter's paradise, where a skilful gunner could never starve. The river was alive with water-fowl, and bright-hued fish sparkled everywhere in the sun. For two days he leisurely pursued his way, and when he paused to eat, the choicest meats of the wildwood were broiling upon his coals, and the tropical fruits served for his dessert. He encountered dells between the rocky cliffs, where wild grapes hung in clusters of immense size, and from the thickets of orange-trees he plucked the most luscious golden fruit. He was tempted in this terrestrial paradise of fruits, flowers, and game to abandon the object of his long and painful search, and settle down into the life-long hermit and hunter of this region. The luxury of this sylvan retreat, where the delicious fruits fell in unnoticed profusion to the earth, and where man could live, dream, and

meditate without toil, was a more dangerous obstacle to his advance and to his cherished purpose than the hardships and dangers of his earlier marches, which had only developed the giant will within him. Now the gentle fetters of sensuousness, of ease, *insouciance*, and of plenty caused him to linger idly when the mysterious wonders of the Hebrew's island were almost within his grasp.

But the seeming indolence of the man who lay stretched at ease upon flowery banks, enjoying the tropical fruits, and sleeping in the balmy, lulling air, was only another manifestation of the undaunted will which slumbered in him. He knew that he required rest, repose, and renewed energies for the forest tramp. And so, like the master minds of all ages, he knew when to idle and to sleep. At length, after a week's sojourn in this paradise of fruit, he started up, grasped his rifle with the vigor of resuscitated physical energy, and again commenced to cut his way with his hunting-knife through the tangled vines which impeded his way up the Rio Xingú. On the following day he saw that a great opening in the trees was just ahead of him. He could see the greater fulness of light pouring into the twilight of the woods. Nearer and nearer came the opening. The sky showed now with only a dozen trees standing across its blue. He cut his way past the few remaining trunks, flung aside the severed vines, and then his eyes encountered the tranquil blue waters of a great lake, dreaming in all their loveliness before him. The *first* lake of the chain had been gained by the man who had started in a little boat from the Atlantic, hundreds and hundreds of miles now behind him. Far away over the serene mirror he saw an island, dome-shaped. It was of the richest, brightest emerald hue, and clothed not with vines, or trees, or shrubs, but only grass. He slowly skirted the shore, and traced against the background of the sky-blue lake he saw the figures of scarlet flamingoes standing upon the shore, and apparently contemplating in dreamy silence the serene beauty of the expanse of water. Then flamingoes, white as the driven snow,

with scarlet-tipped wings, alighted upon the shore, and joined in the reverie of the others. The extent of the lake amazed him, so small had it seemed to his eyes from the mountain at the gate of the paradise. The whole scene was dream-like. Not a ripple stirred the smooth surface of the lake. Only upon the white sands of the shore was there a whisper, as the lake lovingly caressed the beach. Some enchanter's spell surely was over the locality. No birds sang, though they could be seen perched upon the branches. All seemed to dream in the narcotic influence which ruled the lake. At last, as he held on his way along the sands of the beach, which afforded him a hard and sure pathway, he came to the vicinity of the dome island. Here he beheld a long train of white swans slowly moving across the waters. So noiseless, however, was the whole scene, that they, too, seemed to be more dreaming than floating. At length the sun went down in a golden mist at the west, which poured through the forest in inclined plains, and gave the motionless lake the hue of gold. Then the brightness faded slowly out into dingy purple, and the lake grew dark. Then the forms of swans and stately flamingoes were seen no more, and the stillness of night settled upon the waters. The atmosphere was soft and lulling, as the man stretched himself upon the sands to sleep. There was a luxury of silence and repose which he had never known. Not a single note of nocturnal bird, or sound of nocturnal beast disturbed the dream of nature. There was only a whisper of water upon the beach, a sense of balm and purity in the air, and an invitation to dream in the utter silence of the place. Was this the noiseless signal that the man's hopes were of near fruition? Did the peaceful sleep which fell upon him come as the harbinger of ultimate success? All night long he dreamed, and the Hebrew's secret was revealed to him in the wilderness, and that which he had hoped for, became realization. The sceptre of power passed into his keeping, and men of intellect became his creatures, his tools, his humble flatterers. For his aggrandizement they labored, for his smile they daily intrigued, and

for his friendship they sacrificed the bright and beautiful of their lives. He had gained the summit, and men of wealth and men of brains did homage to him. All the troubles of his eventful life were obliterated, and his triumphs became the wonder of mortals. And then, in the plenitude of his power, a present of transcendent value was brought to him, wrapped in layers of velvet. And when the velvet was unrolled the bundle was found to be wrapped in softest silk, and then the inner covering was revealed of plain white linen. Then crowded his friends around him in wonder to see his prize. Horror! Out from the linen wrapping tumbled a long, white bag, with frozen contents, and with a cry of anguish the White Mask awoke upon the shore of the blue lake, over which the morning sunbeams were stealing, and over which the magic silence and repose still hung.

Did he heed the warning? Do men ever heed warnings upon whom destiny has stamped an indomitable spirit of ambition? No. He was a man of iron. He was fearless of consequences. Whatever ambition prompted he never hesitated to perform, for with him will and success were synonymous. He had penetrated the wilderness to possess himself of the He-brew's secret. If successful in the woods, he would be a power among civilized men. He relinquished absolute safety in the plentiful forest, and resolved to hazard the encounter with men. So he arose from the shore, and pursued his journey in the early morning. He followed the lake shore until he reached its extremity. Then he followed the bank of the river, which by its widening had formed the lake, and passed on under the shadows of the trees again. By the close of day he had reached the second lake formed by the river, and saw that it was full of islands, some foliage-crowned, and others singularly bare. One of these must surely be the island pierced by the point of his dividers. To his delight, he found that the lake was scarcely more than twelve inches in depth. He waded out into the water, and discovered that that depth was uniform. Returning then to the shore, he shot a deer lurking

in the thicket, dressed it, hung it by the horns in a tree, and just at nightfall sat down upon the shore, and cooked his supper of venison. He slept then soundly, satisfied that the terminus of his journey was near. When morning burst with tropical suddenness upon the earth, he arose and refreshed himself with another meal of the venison, and then carefully surveyed the lake and its surroundings. On all sides but one the shore was flat, and covered with immense trees. The other side was a gently sloping hill, destitute of vegetation, but covered with a *cascalho* or gravel sheet. Opposite to this gravelly hill the islands in the lake were bare, and apparently covered with the same gravel, as if at some former period they had been a part of the gravelly hill, but had been severed from it by the river, which had washed channels through it, and formed the naked islands. The islands just above them were covered with the luxuriant growth which characterized the whole paradise. The eyes of the explorer could cover the entire sweep of the lake, which seemed to be about two miles in diameter. After scrutinizing the waters and the shore, to see that no alligators or other dangerous foes were lurking to entrap him, he became satisfied that the lake was as safe as it was beautiful; and accordingly, he entered the shallow waters and commenced to wade up towards the gravel islands. Birds were singing upon the shores in strange contrast to the utter stillness of the first lake. The sunbeams flooded over the waters dazzlingly, and he found that his walk was by no means arduous. The bottom of the lake was of hard white sand, and as even as the floor of a house. In an hour's time he had reached the first island, which was buried in foliage and flowers. Pausing here to rest and look about him, he found that the island was not more than two hundred feet in diameter, and full of birds, which scattered away in every direction before him. The orange-trees upon this spot were full of ripe fruit, upon which he regaled himself, and then entering the lake, resumed his advance, heading for one of the gravel islands, opposite the sloping *cascalho*. He was not long in reaching the bare, flat island, and just as


he was about to step upon it from the water something attracted his attention, standing upon its shore, and near the water's edge. It was a fragment of rock, the only one he could see over the sheet of gravel which covered the place. It was a foot in height, and upon it he saw that something had been traced by an iron or steel instrument. He looked at it for an instant, and then with a cry of exultation stepped ashore, knelt down before it, and saw plainly cut in the stone the exact likeness of the *Arabic character* which was upon the three studs. With the accuracy of an arrow, as it appeared to his delighted eyes, he had penetrated hundreds of miles of pathless forests to the recording stone set up by the Hebrew. A thrill of delight passed over him, and his heart violently throbbed in its prison. Here, without a doubt, was buried countless treasure, or at least, it was the key to a mine of unworked wealth. Eagerly he flung aside his rifle, and with axe and hunting-knife proceeded to dig a pit under the spot marked by the fragment of rock. He toiled until dark, and had excavated a considerable pit without discovering anything of the slightest value. His heart sank within him. All was vain. It was evident now that the Arabic character was only a key or guide to something else than a treasure hidden under the stone. When night came he stretched himself upon the gravel to sleep, weary, hungry, disheartened. Had all his hardship been useless? Had he followed the guidance of his map and studs without the additional key requisite to unravel the mystery? Was all his perseverance to be of no avail? What meant the fragment of rock, and the Arabic character? At length he dreamed, and again the mystery seemed unveiled to him. When he awoke, daylight was upon the world, and he arose and gazed over the gravelly island. What could the rock placed upon the shore signify? The pangs of hunger soon drove him to the wooded side of the lake for food. He waded to the mainland, searched for game, and finally shot a deer. With a part of the carcass, he waded back to the gravel island, and found enough driftwood along its shores to build him a good fire. When

the venison had been cooked upon the coals, and a hearty meal made from it, he felt his spirits again rise into buoyancy; and stretching himself along the ground, with his head elevated upon his bent arm, he pondered, long and deeply, the occult symbolism of the Arabic character upon the stone. There could be no question that the talisman indicated the island as a vital point in his search. What was there about the gravel island that induced the Hebrew to single it out from all the islands of the lake? He carefully noted the character of the gravel lying around him. It was intermixed with the common red, drift clay of the vicinity. The island and the hill of the adjacent shore had, evidently, at some former period, been one inclined plain. At last, in his earnestness of mental study, he chanced to look upon the dying coals of his fire. One of them, brighter than its fellows, was glittering upon some object in the gravel upon which he had built the fire. He took the object up in his hand, and found it was a pebble. He arose, and with a strange thrill of surprise, ran to the water's edge and washed the dirt from it, and held it up to the sunlight. Flash after flash came from it. A great cry escaped him. There was no further reason to doubt. He ran to his rifle and laid the glittering pebble upon it, and then groped around in the gravel again. He found others like it, some larger, many smaller. To the sunlight, each and every one of them emitted the same brilliant flash after the water had cleansed them. Finally, a large one rewarded his search. He washed that too, and held it up tremblingly to the sunlight. Flash after flash came from it. He looked for a moment upon it, turning it about in the sunbeams, and then as a new life seemed to sparkle in it at every movement of his fingers, he felt the dizziness of excessive joy come over him; and then, under the severity of the mental strain, he fell headlong and senseless upon the shore, and the magnificent *diamond* of the Brazils fell, flashing in the sunlight, away from his relaxed and powerless fingers.

CHAPTER XVII.

*"A story of Ponçé de Leon,
A voyager withered and old,
Who came to the sunny Antilles
In quest of a country of gold."*

The Fountain of Youth.

NE of the most accomplished officers of the United States army, and a renowned *sabreur*, was twirling his mustache and awaiting the pleasure of a young lady who was comparing the merits of several bracelets in the most famous and elegant jewelry establishment of the metropolis. While his companion was still undecided as to her choice, he amused himself by glancing over the glass cases loaded with everything rich and beautiful in the jeweller's art, or watching the gayly dressed ladies who were alighting from their carriages and sauntering gracefully into the shop. Finally his attention was centred upon a young lady, plainly dressed, who came in with a little girl clinging to her hand. Both were beautiful, the young lady particularly so. He whispered to his companion :

"There is a lovely face. Don't you think so? I know that you are capable of appreciating female beauty in spite of your sex."

The lady looked up from her bracelets, glanced in the direction indicated, and then replied :

"Your taste is always perfect. She is beautiful. She is a patrician too. The marks are unmistakable. But you notice the clerks. They will judge her by her dress and neglect her, for she is manifestly too poor to dress much."

The lady turned to a renewed study of the bracelets, and the officer continued to study the new-comer, as she led the little girl up to the counter and inquired for plain gold rings. She was near to him, and he could hear every remark she made. The clerk carelessly took out a case of rings and placed them before her, after a cool glance at her dress from head to foot.

He then gazed idly about upon the ladies who dropped in one by one, as if it was not the slightest concern to him whether his customer immediately before him made a purchase or not. The little girl climbed up on a velvet-covered stool, and with all the eagerness of childhood gazed upon the rows of glittering rings, and chatted about them while the young lady examined them. The child knew that her own little, pink finger was to be the recipient of the ring which would be purchased, and so she held it out impatiently to the lady, who tried the rings one after another upon it. It was evidently a difficult matter to fit a ring to the juvenile capacity, and the little girl laughed outright as she said :

“ Little girls cost more trouble than they are worth ; don't they ? ”.

The young lady looked up, smiled at the remark, and then caught the officer's eye. Her eyes dropped immediately to the rings. That glance convinced the officer that her eyes were beautiful. The young lady had an instantaneous and similar conviction regarding the eyes of the *sabreur*. She did not, however, look towards him again, whereat he was disappointed. Presently he heard the clerk condescend to answer some of her inquiries regarding other kinds of rings. His nonchalance was finally so far broken that this jewelry underling was induced to walk slowly, and with dignity, to a neighboring iron safe, fling open the door of the same carelessly, and produce from its recesses another case of rings which were *chased*. He laid these out upon the counter for her inspection, and then gazed gloomily out through the glass doors into the crowded thoroughfare. He would have made an admirable model for a statue of Reverie. But scarcely had his eyes rested upon the entrance of the shop, than they widened into surprise. The eyes, then, were capable of a decided expression. Amazement was certainly an attribute of this dignitary's orbs of vision, for they widened more and more as they gazed. Probably in the whole of his jewelry experience (and he certainly had the air of one who had delved to the bottom of jewelry, and of every other

art except civility,) he had never witnessed a similar vision in a jewelry shop, at least a jewelry shop where "*people of consideration*" were wont to congregate. Other eyes were also directed to the new-comer who had awakened an expression in the eyes of the serene clerk. Garments of such peculiar cut were not often seen amid the silks and velvets which thronged the great jewelry show-room of "Hall, Blue & Co."

The startling vision at the entrance was an aged and weather-beaten seaman, who had certainly not donned for the occasion his holiday attire. He had evidently just landed from his ship, and had found his way up the great thoroughfare without the precaution of arraying himself in his shore "*toggery*." He had evidently been a rover under warm suns, and was brown as a nut. Shreds of gray hair were visible under his *tarpaulin*, and his well-worn blue jacket and trousers had been often in contact with tarred ropes and the *slush* bucket of ships. Still he was a manly looking sailor, and, though aged, was good for a couple of long voyages yet. He seemed perfectly at home among the elegantly dressed ladies who thronged the place, and made his way directly up to the counter where the young lady and the little girl were examining the rings.

"And what do you want, sir," demanded the serene clerk, with an air of repulsion.

"I'll tell you when I get ready, youngster," replied the old sailor. "Attend to the lady. I can wait."

At these words, the seaman settled himself comfortably upon one of the velvet stools, and looked about him. The clerk, at receiving an appellation so undignified as that of *youngster*, was appalled. The manner of the old seaman was one of utter independence and well-established dignity. It was evident that the showily dressed clerk might consider himself well off, to be classed among the *youngsters*, the boys of inexperience aboard ship. In the view of all who overheard this brief conversation, and had witnessed the insufferable attitude of the clerk, he had fallen from the pinnacle of presumption to the level of a very

common official, and a single shot had effected this admirable result. But the child who had watched the offensive manner of the young man behind the counter with a certain measure of awe, was delighted now, and exclaimed ;

"That is a real, live sailor, ain't it. Oh ! I'm so glad. I always did want to see a real sailor. May I talk to him ?"

"Certainly," replied the young lady who had charge of her. "Jump down there and make friends with him. I will have to order a ring made for you. They have nothing here that will fit."

As she spoke, she gave the old seaman a smile that went to his heart, and he raised his tarpaulin to her. Then taking the little girl upon his lap, he was soon master of her name, her place of residence, and the name of her father. At the latter name he started, so that the child noticed it.

"What did you start for so, Mr. Sailor," she inquired.

"Because that name sounded familiar to me, little one."

"What ? My father's name ?"

"Yes, little one. You said MacGregor, didn't you ?"

"Yes ! my father's name is MacGregor. But that is not exactly the truth either, Mr. Sailor. Mr. MacGregor is my adopted father. He found me, and made me his little girl."

"And where did you come from ?"

"I don't know. I just come. Nobody knows anything about me. And I believe they have given up trying to find out who I am. It's a bad job. I ain't nobody. I didn't come from anywhere. Tooty says, I'm a little waif. Now tell me who you are, where you came from, and what your name is ?"

"Just wait a minute, little one," said the sailor, highly amused. "Tell me what your father's business is. I mean your adopted father's business. Mr. MacGregor ; what's his business ?"

"He's the editor of a newspaper," replied the child.

"All right," replied her interrogator. "I thought I knew the man. I've seen your father. Now I'll answer some of *your questions*. My name is Trowbridge. I have sailed all

over the world in ships. I'm a sailor, and have seen many countries. Now, if you will give me the number of your father's house and the street, I will send you something that will make your eyes sparkle, that I got away across the sea."

The child was in ecstasies, and looking up to the young lady, said, "May I, Tooty? May I have something that the old sailor wants to send me?"

"I have no objection," she replied. "Come and call upon Mr. MacGregor, sir. He is very partial to seamen and will no doubt be glad to see you, since you have taken such a fancy to his pet."

"She then gave the man the editor's address. He thanked her, and she walked out of the shop, leading Dream-child by the hand. The little one paused at the door, and turning kissed her hand to the seaman. He laughed, and then fell into a reverie when they had disappeared.

"What can I do for you, sir?" inquired the clerk with a more respectful tone than his original salutation, and seeing that the old seaman had fallen into oblivion of his surroundings.

"Send the owner of this shop to me," he said, raising his head. "Tell him I have some valuable diamonds to sell."

"Yes, sir," replied the amazed official. "You are in the contraband trade, eh?"

"No; go about your business. I am no smuggler. Send your employer to me." The tones were peremptory, and the clerk sought a little office in the rear of the show-room. Presently he returned with an aged and courteous gentleman, who addressed the sailor kindly, and ascertained that he was lately from the Brazilian coast, and had picked up diamonds there which he was anxious to ascertain the market value of, and to sell at reasonable rates. He was at once invited into the private office, but before his figure vanished in the rear of the great show-room, the lady who was examining the bracelets and had completed her purchase, said to the army officer, her companion:

"I wish you would be kind enough to let me detain you a

few moments longer than you had anticipated, by asking you to accompany me to the headquarters of the police department. That sailor who has gone in with the proprietor I believe to be an old acquaintance, upon whose track it is proper to place a detective."

"Certainly," was the response. "I am at your service for an hour yet." And the two passed quickly out of the diamond bazaar, and disappeared up the street. In about a quarter of an hour they reappeared at the door of the jewelry establishment and there met a detective who had preceded them a few seconds, having hurried around from the detective-office at their summons. He had started for the shop upon a run, that the sailor might not pass out before the lady returned to identify him.

"I have watched the door," he said. "He must be in the office yet with Mr. Blue. He will have to pass out this way when he has finished his business."

"Had you not better go into the office, and see if he is still with Mr. Blue?" inquired the lady.

"Oh, no!" said the detective; "that would only arouse his suspicion that we were looking for him. He will pass out here after a while, and then I will follow him. Thus he will never know that any one is 'piping' him. I will see where he goes, and thus ascertain all about him."

"I will wait and identify him for you," said the lady.

"Very good," said the detective. "You stand there with the gentleman, and examine the things in the shop window."

The three waited patiently for an entire hour, but the seaman did not come out from the shop of Hall, Blue & Co. Presently, Mr. Blue, of the firm, emerged himself, and was just on the point of taking his carriage, to drive up the street, when the lady accosted him.

"Mr. Blue, I want to speak to you a moment. I saw a sailor go into your counting-room with you, who I suspect is in some way connected with the murder of my father several years ago. This is a detective, and he has come here

with the purpose of keeping his eye upon him until we can ascertain with certainty who he is."

"But, my dear young lady," replied Mr. Blue, who had stood with his hat off while his well-known customer was talking, "this sailor has gone. Did you not see him go out?"

"Gone!" exclaimed they all. "When? How?"

"Why, as soon as he had transacted his business. He came from the Brazils with diamonds to sell, and I purchased several fine stones from him. I bought more than *one hundred thousand dollars'* worth from him. I paid him, and he has gone."

"Then he left before I came," said the detective.

"I should say so," replied Mr. Blue.

"Did you give him a check for the amount, so that I can watch the bank where it is payable?" inquired the detective.

"No; I gave him the amount in bank bills."

"Your firm keep more ready money in your counting-room than most business men," said the detective.

"We do a larger business than many of our fellow-men," said Mr. Blue, with ineffable dignity. "But can I serve you any further, Miss Ettinger?" he said, turning again to the young lady.

"Not that I can see now, Mr. Blue; the bird has flown. But can you give us any clue to his identity, so that we can hunt him up?"

"None, my dear young lady, except that he is a sailor, so he says, recently returned from a voyage to Brazil."

"Good-day, then, Mr. Blue," she said. "We will not detain you further."

"Wait one moment, please, sir," said the detective, as Mr. Blue was stepping into his carriage. "Will you be kind enough to tell us what the size of the bills were you gave him?"

"Oh, yes! they were one-thousand-dollar bills. Good-day, Miss Ettinger. Good-day, gentlemen." The wealthy jeweller closed his carriage door with a snap, and the driver applied the whip to the spirited bays, and away they flew up the street. But as the carriage rolled away and left the discomfited trio

in a fog as to their next step regarding the lost sailor, Mr. Blue was communing with himself thus :

"Hang these people ! Do they think I am going to post them on my diamond importer's whereabouts ? Here I have bought one hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of first-water diamonds for a little more than one hundred thousand dollars. My profits will be at least eighty thousand dollars at retail. Post them up, indeed, on Trowbridge's whereabouts ! We'll see how I will post them. Here, Henry."

He pulled at the bell-rope in his carriage, and the driver leaned over the box to receive orders, at the same time pulling in his horses.

"Drive to the Tontine coffee-house."

"Yes, sir."

The carriage was turned about and driven to the locality indicated. In a few minutes the coffee-house was reached, and the jeweller entered the place, and called for pen and ink. He then sought a table, and wrote thus :

"MY DEAR TROWBRIDGE :

"A Miss Ettinger, daughter of one of our old Hebrew bankers, accompanied by an army officer and a detective from headquarters, came to the store shortly after you left, seeking for the old sailor who was in consultation with me, and who, she said, was in some way connected with the murder of her father, several years ago. I don't know anything of your private affairs, and don't want to. I only know that you have more diamonds to dispose of. I give you this timely warning that you may protect yourself. The little key I gave you will always admit you to my private room, from the rear. Our interests as traders are common, and you can always rely upon me to attend to my own business, and not to cripple yours. Give us another call from the rear when you think your merchandise weighs heavily on your hands. We will do as well with you as any other diamond house : possibly better.

"Yours truly,

H. BLUE."

This missive was sealed, and mailed at the next post-office station the carriage reached. From the fact that it was mailed, there could be no hesitation in affirming that Mr. Blue was acquainted with the old sailor's address.

Before two hours had elapsed the detective had changed his dress for that of an English sailor, and was seen lounging about the docks, and the sailors' boarding-houses. He was the same keen officer of the law who had been originally put upon the trail of Hartwell by the clergyman. Miss Ettinger had notified him that the voice of the old sailor was strangely like that of the man who had duped her, and gained possession of the Arabic stud more than a year before. The detective had not forgotten his old suspicion, that this visitor to Miss Ettinger must have ascertained that the detective office had one of the Arabic studs and were following the trail of Hartwell, through the complicity of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, or from her indiscretion in talking, she being the only one not pledged to secrecy. The detective was curious to know who the man was that had duped the Jewess, and gone off with all three of the murdered Ettinger's studs. So he did not relinquish his search in the vicinity of vessels recently arrived from the Brazilian coast, for several days. But his diligence was unrewarded. He could not learn from officers or men connected with such vessels, that any gray-haired or aged sailor had been among their crews. While this officer of the police was thus fruitlessly engaged, the old sailor, Trowbridge, at his lodgings, in a locality far away from docks and shipping, was quietly chuckling over the facility with which he had not only silenced the possible gossip of the firm of Hall, Blue & Co., but had also made the junior member, Mr. Blue, a prompt correspondent when danger was following him through the streets of the city. He had received the latter gentleman's note of warning, and had provided himself with several different disguises for all emergencies. The sailor's garb had been 'consigned to the secret recesses of his new trunk. Mr. Trowbridge was now a venerable, retired English banker, sojourning in America for pleas-

ure. The volume of his beautiful white hair falling upon his shoulders, and his long, white beard, were suggestive of the deference and courtesy which should be extended to one so venerable and so feeble. His quiet suit of black broadcloth, and his marvelous, old-fashioned, gold-headed cane, were in keeping with his *tout ensemble*. Very brown and very aged were the features of the English banker. He did not forget his promise, however, to the beautiful little girl of the jewelry shop memory. Danger did not prevent him sending, by a messenger, a splendid gray parrot with scarlet tuft to the residence of Dream-child. The cage he sent with it was gilded, and a note which accompanied the present ran thus :

"Some day the old sailor will come to visit Dream-child. Therefore, my dear little girl, be sure and hang the parrot's cage on all fine days outside the window, so that when I do come, I won't mistake the house."

The child was in ecstasies, and every bright day she insisted upon hanging the cage out the front window, so that the old sailor should make no mistake as to her residence. The responsibilities of the young governess were thus increased. For upon her fell the duty of caring for "Poll's" comfort. Upon the ears of MacGregor came at times, when the doors were open, the sound of Dream-child's prattle as she carried on a conversation with her parrot. It was a comfort to his desolate heart to know that his purse was making the heart of the little waif happy, and her intellect cultured. She was learning fast under the quiet, unobtrusive music-teacher, who never crossed his path, but transacted all her business with him through the little mail-carrier, who came pattering down the hall, and burst into his sanctum with her independent, boisterous laugh, or pensively glided in, according to her moods.

He was utterly secluded in his habits, and none of the household interfered with him except Dream-child, whose affection was fast supplanting the memory of his own little darling, who *had gone to the spirit-land* when he was unsummoned by the

heartless mother. During the summer which had just passed the editor had gone to the beautiful country-seat presented to him by the stockholders, and Dream-child had accompanied him. He had invited his mother's sister to become a permanent occupant of his country house, to keep it in order for his annual visit, and to use it for her own comfort during the balance of the year. Thus, during the summer months, she was the custodian of Dream-child, while the governess and music-teacher remained in the city. The governess he never encountered, and she was as literally dead to him as any of the other boarders who lived in her sister's city establishment. In the city he was isolated from everything but business and Dream-child. But in the country, he and his little elf moved everywhere; through woods and meadows, chatting with the country people, who knew nothing of him or his sad history, or sitting together on shady banks, beside serene trout-streams, talking or reading to each other like two children the dear old fables of Fairy-land. The companionship of the dreamy little girl was just beginning to vein his blighted, dark life with threads of golden cheer. He smiled oftener for her dear, little sake. He seemed to remember that he had no right to overshadow her young life by the gloom of his own sad fate. His own home had been wrecked, but her home was just putting on its spring colors, and with terrible energy he strove to shake off that incessant gnawing at his heart which memory ever stimulated. Thus Dream-child in her innocence was slowly, but surely restoring to him his native buoyancy, his poetic instincts, his pristine belief in the pure, the true, and the beautiful, which his inhuman wife had for a time crushed. There were also developing in Dream-child, young as she was, evidences of that temperament, which makes a poet's heart yearn towards the unfortunate possessor of it. That temperament was the poetic instinct, the greatest curse when trampled upon by one's associates, and the greatest blessing of life, when gently fostered and encouraged, that the Divine will ever planted in the souls of mortals. The little child, with her

great soul eyes, began to idealize. She began to fancy that men and women might be angels, even on the earth ; that right was sure to triumph in the life-battle ; that the evil and the malignant never prevailed in the end. And MacGregor would lean over her, with the tears half starting out from his broken heart, and whisper to her that it was true, even when his own faith had been well-nigh blasted. The child's dreams, that God did take care of His own, should be indulged in the spring of her little, trusting life, even if the terrible awakening to the reality should come at last. And thus, by the brookside, where the shadows of the graceful elms fell upon the glassy mirror, or in sight of the blue hills, whose peaks the snowy clouds stooped to kiss, the lone, deserted man encouraged the bud of poetry to open its petals, and pressed it tenderly to his thrilled heart to give it nourishing warmth. And in time this contact with the pure, innocent, and beautiful, and this fostering in another the faith which he had almost lost himself, began to react upon his own poetic temperament. Perhaps, after all, God had only been subjecting him to this ordeal of agony, this desertion, this shattering of hopes, that He might at last introduce him to those who were true, and whom he could the better appreciate by the fearful contrast. And thus, in his dark sky, came out at last a clear, sweet, luminous star ; the little pure, cheering star, Dream-child, the wandering, lost, parentless, lovely poet-child, an inspirational ray from the land of the blest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

*"She raised her voice on high and sang so clear,
The favours came scudding from the groves to hear,
And all the bending forest lent an ear."*

Dryden.

IT had been the custom of MacGregor, after his wife had abandoned him, to devote the greater part of Sunday to his mental culture. During the other days of the week his duties as editor were utterly engrossing. But Sunday was his day of rest. He usually devoted several hours of that day to exercise in the open air. The remainder of the day he locked himself in his room, and devoted himself to the study of his favorite authors. He had once been a constant attendant upon the services of religion. But now he never attended church. The promises of God which he heard repeated there seemed to mock him. Integrity, perseverance, industry, earnestness, and trust in God, he had found to his entire satisfaction, were not sure precursors of God's blessings. He had for years practised all of these, and yet that which he valued most, above all things in life, a home, and a loving family, were torn from him. If this was the reward God bestowed upon the faithful and the earnest worker, then it seemed better to leave religion in the lurch, and to devote his time to books, which were certainly, for the time he was busy with them, a sure opiate for the loneliness and misery which fell upon him the moment he ceased work and commenced to meditate upon himself. Being a poet, he was naturally thrilled by the idealism of religion; but when a good life failed to bring him even the peace and the happy home that the vicious and the sensual enjoyed, he abandoned church, but still lived as justly, as correctly, as any member of the congregation he had left. His disappointment at the wreck of his home, and the loss of his child, had embittered him, and now, every one who mentioned the goodness of God to him seemed to him to be canting.

Why had not God spared him from the great agony, the wreck of the tender affections of the heart ?

But at length, time, and the sweet influence of Dream-child gradually brought back to him his native admiration of all that was pure, religious, and beautiful. He had never soiled the columns of his newspaper with the slightest tinge of the gall which had taken possession of his heart. His education, his instincts, and his noble nature, would not allow him to sneer in public at those monuments of religion which were revered by so many thousands of the upright and exemplary members of society. He fostered his own bitterness, but he would not weaken the sublime faith of others in the justice of God, by a single stroke of his powerful pen. But now Dream-child was making demands upon his moral teachings. Every day her precocious little intellect was demanding to know the reason of things, both in the material and spiritual world. He saw that her beautiful soul would put on its bias, and form its line of action through life, in accordance with his views. The lovely elf seemed to regard her adopted father as an oracle, particularly since the poetic in him had been revealed to her. To her, he was a most wonderful man. "MacGregor," she said to him one day, "you are a profound man ; yes, your learning is wonderful. I wish I knew half so much as you."

The editor laughed outright, and then asked her : "Did you learn that great word from Tooty ?"

"Yes ; from Tooty," she said, as she twined her little arm around his neck.

"And what does *profound* mean, Dream-child ?"

"It means deep, MacGregor. It means that you know more than most people, who only know what is on the surface."

"And did Tooty explain the word to you in this way ?"

"Yes. I heard her repeating some poetry one day, and this word was in it. So I asked her."

Finding that every word that escaped his lips was gold to the child, he became cautious regarding any religious views the little one sought to elicit from him. He shuddered at the idea

of communicating to her plastic mind any principles regarding God that might induce her to pursue a career different from other children who were brought up under a strong sense of religious restraint. Thus it was manifest that the religious instinct was strong within him, after the religious practices had ceased. Innocence, purity, youth, plead strongly with a true, noble heart to be guided safely. And thus, bitter himself at the cruelty which had shattered his own life, he dared not weaken the child's early trust in the Great Being, whom it was evident the unseen "Tooty" regarded with the utmost confidence and affection.

But one day he encountered a surprise. It was Sunday, and he had wandered away through the metropolis for exercise; scarcely noticing where his footsteps led him. The day was bright and beautiful, and as he wandered on in reverie, he noticed at last that the great avenue of fashion upon which he had entered was unusually thronged with people. There was no excuse for piety to remain at home. The air was lovely, and fair-weather Christians were abroad in droves, filling the pavements their entire extent, and marching on in stately piety to their respective churches. "There must be something true at the bottom of this universal instinct for Divine worship," he said to himself, as he witnessed the streams of people pouring into the churches. "Dress, and fashion, and display, are alleged to be the great incentive to all this turnout on Sunday. But I for one do not believe it. If one goes to display dress, two go from an instinct of duty, or propriety, else the majority of worshippers would soon supplant religious services by mere display of fashionable goods upon the altars. But for hundreds of years people have been church-goers, and the altars display yet sacred symbols, instead of bundles of dry-goods, silks, and velvets. Hence, I maintain that the instinct of worship transcends the instinct of the dry-goods show-room. I will go in and listen, for a novelty."

He had paused before a Christian temple, through whose doors the *élite* of the great avenue were pouring in. It was

evidently as fashionable a resort for worshippers as the temple of Juno Lucina, frequented by the patricians of Rome. He entered with the crowd, while the melody of the organ was thundering on the air. His appearance was so eminently that of a refined and intellectual man, that he had not long to wait in the aisle. Before even the sexton had time to discover his wants as a stranger, a gentleman of venerable appearance saw him, and recognizing him at once, offered him a seat in his own comfortable pew. He was one of the stockholders in his own newspaper, who warmly greeted him after he was seated. Many lovely eyes were soon turned upon the person of MacGregor. He was superbly handsome, and his eyes were powerful magnets. Intellectual labor, too, had chiselled out all superfluous flesh from his face. One glance at him sufficed to inform the cultured that he was a born leader of men. Chief, leader, originator of measures was as plainly written upon him as gentleman, poet, sympathizer. But over all his perfect manliness, an indescribable air of heart-suffering was slightly manifest to the close observer. He had not attained yet the fullness of his life, as God had intended. Something was lacking to carry him up to the perfection of his meridian splendor. His brilliant eyes roved about too eagerly from face to face of the female throng, seeking and never finding in that array of beauty and loveliness that which could fix his gaze. The man was not at peace. His countenance, too, was pale, the result of the never-ending hunger which gnawed at his heart, when he was not occupied in his official routine. God had created the man to love and to be loved. Until that want of his nature was satisfied, he would ever manifest unrest in his moments of intellectual relaxation. Hence, his look was eager as it met the faces of women. The tender in him was seeking a response. He was scarcely conscious of it, of this yearning, hungry look, so bitterly did the recollection of his blighted home press upon his heart.

But as the congregation arose to their feet, and the solemn and sublime words of the Anglican ritual rolled away over the

throng, a thrill passed over him, and all his lost feelings of devotion returned to him once more. Yes! there is a God beyond the breadth and depth of human intelligence, and there are moments when it seems sacrilege to measure His dispensations by the standard of justice set up by His creatures. MacGregor was awed as he listened to the words of Scripture, for he was eminently appreciative of the sublime in language and the reverential in worship. And something seemed to whisper to him that he had estimated his Creator entirely from the standpoint of selfishness. How could God have made a woman love him who had demonstrated her utter unworthiness to possess such steadfast love as he could give? He was conscious that he deserved to be loved by a great woman. He knew now that his wife had been an utterly selfish woman, who estimated men by their mere pecuniary value. But what of his little daughter, who had loved her father tenderly, and had gone now beyond the veil? Perchance she was one of the seraph choir, and was now pleading with God for blessings upon his lonely head. This reflection was too much for him, and the tears welled up to his eyes, and he could scarcely restrain their flow. Then the madness of his soul returned to him at the thought that the mother had withheld the dying child from his arms, and for a moment he could have brained this female demon before the very altar of God. But then a softer emotion stole over him. He sank with the worshippers to his seat, and from the hidden choir arose a single voice so sweet, so powerful, so melting in its pure melody, ascending to the throne of God, that every emotion of violence vanished, and the heart softened. He was too thorough a judge of vocal music to be distracted when it burst to life within a few paces of him. So exquisitely fashioned was his ear to melody, and so sensitive his soul to the inner inspiration of it, that he was now full of rapture. No ordinary singer was leading the hearts of the worshippers heavenward. The intense silence with which all hung upon that solo testified that a great vocalist was standing between the people and the great white throne. Up, up, she mounted,

the wonderful Christian enchantress, to the presence of the celestials, and it was evident that her whole soul was worshipping as she sang. Then burst forth the grand chorus from the hidden choir, and the effect was superb. Tears were lurking in the eyes of MacGregor, and he was ashamed that he had doubted God, the Infinite, the Pure, the Eternal. Again stole forth the single melody, trembling with the intensity of the meaning which attached to the hymn of praise, and again all were breathless in the sweetness of the wonderful solo. Nothing of breadth, or height, or sweetness seem lacking to the singer, and her expression was devotional in the extreme. Surely in the far-off heaven the echo of that voice would be taken up and repeated by the angels. The hymn was over then, and the solemn and majestic service of the church continued. That exquisite rendering of the hymn had softened and opened the heart so long closed against God. It prepared him for a still further appreciation of the service, and before it was over he found the purpose forming in him to come again. There were grand and holy emotions elicited by this solemn conversation of priest and people with God. There were many earnest worshippers, he could plainly see, and the trivial and the careless who were glancing everywhere about them, were few. But when the venerable bishop arose and preached directly at the hearts and lives of the people in tones of earnest and powerful eloquence, MacGregor was deeply impressed. Yes, while he had been nursing and dwelling upon his personal wrongs, the worship of the true God had been going on. In the very spot he should have sought divine assistance, before this sanctuary, others had found strength to battle anew with the trials and cares of life. For them had been held up here the supernatural motive to live justly, patiently, and with resignation to the dispensations of the Almighty Power which had ordained events and meted out sufferings. The heavy-hearted listener found that his native instincts of religion were coming back to him, and the æsthetical emotions born of his poet's heart were finding a home in this stately, pure, noble ritual. And then again came

music, sweet, precious, trembling music, pouring out all its shell in the worship of the Eternal. Ah! that exquisite voice! how it wandered away again above the tumult of melodious voices and went winging its musical flight up to the pure and the unsearchable God. Yes! the woman hidden with the choir was adding her tribute, her wonderful gift of melody to the worship of the glorious, the omnipotent God. He bowed his proud head at last. All that had been dear to him, his desolate home, his wife, his departed child, his blighted hopes, all came flooding upon his heart, and he bowed his head to pray God for mercy upon him, that he might abandon all to His holy will and devote the remainder of his life and talents to the circulation of true principles, and to do this for the exalted motive that the Creator of men willed it to be done.

The music ceased, and soon the assembly of wealth, beauty, and talent were dismissed to their homes. As he passed out from the pew into the aisle, he inquired of his acquaintance who the solo singer was that had contributed so powerfully to the effect of the choir.

"Edith Graham is her name," said the gentleman who owned the pew. "Marvellously sweet, is she not? She is quite young, and a music teacher of extraordinary gifts, I hear. I have never seen her, but I hear she is beautiful as well as accomplished."

MacGregor was startled at the utterance of that name, but he restrained the words upon his lips, which might have admitted the gentleman into the mysteries of his own private life. He passed out with him from the church, and, after accepting the gentleman's invitation to come again to his pew, left the church behind him and sought his apartments. Shortly after reaching his rooms he rang the bell and summoned a servant, who was directed to send the landlady to him when she might be disengaged. After a time the proprietress of the house made her appearance, and was invited to be seated.

"I have experienced a great surprise to-day," he said. "I have been to a Christian church, an Episcopalian church, and

have discovered that your sister is a wonderful singer. I would like to serve the owner of such a voice, if she is dependent upon the public for her support, in a way that will be very effective. Notices of her classes and of her qualities, put in the columns of my paper, will be of great service to her, and she shall have such notices from me gratis if she so desires."

"You are very kind, indeed," exclaimed the landlady, "and I know that Edith would be delighted to have such assistance, as she has others dependent upon her exertions. She works very hard from morning till night with her classes, and her compensation for teaching is not adequate to her wants. I don't know what she would do without the salary you give her for taking care of Dream-child."

"And you think she would be glad to take advantage of my offer of a space in our advertising columns?"

"I know it, Mr. MacGregor. I have heard her say so."

"And why did you not speak to me about it?" he inquired.

"Edith said that you were so absorbed in your business, and so secluded in your habits, that you would probably not care to be intruded upon, except in the way of regular business; that she had no money to expend in advertisements."

MacGregor smiled, and said: "I know that I must have established the reputation of being a misanthrope in this house, for I never see any one. But I am nothing of the kind, and will gladly give assistance to artists or musicians, when I can without injury to the interests of the stockholders of my paper. Why, madame, I write gratuitous notices to help artists and actors frequently."

"Thank you, Mr. MacGregor, for your kind offer. I know the value of it, and so will Edith."

"Certainly she will," he said. "Tell her to write out such an advertisement as she thinks will aid her or increase the size or quality of her classes, and send it to me. I will either put it in my paper entire, or will strengthen it by such alterations as I deem just. I have listened to her wonderful voice, and I shall do it justice, rest assured."

The landlady was profuse in her expressions of thanks, and then retired.

"How wonderful," said the editor to himself, when he was alone. "Here I have been for more than a year upon the same floor with a musical genius, a poor, struggling girl, toiling for her bread, and the guardian of my little Dream-child, and I have been utterly oblivious of her qualities. Ah! I must try to forget my business and my heartaches for a while, and look at what is transpiring immediately around me. Heavens! What an exquisite voice that girl has! and Dream-child told me long, long ago, that the poor creature suffers in secret, and cannot always conceal it at night. What can be her history? Help her! Of course I'll help her in my paper. Talk of the solo of a Gionowich or a Jordini! Why, this exquisite creature can beat everything in singing, and probably in composing too. I'll bring her out before the public."

After dark on that eventful Sunday, Dream-child came into the sanctum of the editor for her usual recreation and fun with her father. She climbed up in his lap, and he saw that she had something white in her little hand.

"What is it, my little sweetheart?" he said. "Have you been writing me a letter?"

"No, MacGregor. Tooty wrote this, and told me to bring it to you."

He tore open the note, and read thus:

"MR. MACGREGOR:

"DEAR SIR,—Since you have volunteered to set your lance in rest for me, a dowerless maiden, my exultation knows no bounds. If your powerful pen cannot elevate me from my present musical obscurity, then perish all the modern appliances by which merit is presented to public notice. I do believe now that I am a singer, but never did the reality of that gift appear so palpable to me as since your discriminating voice has pronounced the verdict. I have read carefully all of your musical criticisms for the past year. They have found an echo

in my understanding, and I am but one of a dozen musicians who look to your paper as a criterion by which to weigh the relative merits of the celebrities of this city. M——t pronounces you the greatest musical critic of the day. And if his "head of crystal" can descend to adulation, perhaps you will believe so humble an admiration as mine to be sincere. Know, then, that your language of praise to my sister has made me giddy. If you are going to applaud me publicly, then I am going to be something surely. Some people are destroyed by a false appreciation of their real strength. Thank God! that my destruction is going to depend upon *your* appreciation of my real strength. Oh! how grateful I am to you, Mr. MacGregor. Do you know what a true woman's gratitude is? I am very deficient in means to display pecuniary gratitude, but if I don't reward you by making this little pearl, Dream-child, love you better than a father was ever loved before, then perish all efforts to express gratitude. I want to say to you something that will surprise and delight you. Dream-child is a musical genius. I suspected it first from physical formation. I know it now from careful experiments. She will thrill your ears some day (and much sooner than you expect) like a bird from paradise. Oh! the dear, little, perfect soul and body! From what sphere has she floated to you?

"I enclose you what I expect you to publish, to aid my *classes*. But I trust to your correcting pen to remedy deficiencies. Blow my trumpet in your own way

"Yours, gratefully,

"EDITH GRAHAM."

MacGregor laid the note on his table with an exclamation of surprise, and then sat holding the child and meditating deeply. Presently, Dream-child, who was resting her little head against his breast, as was her wont when she saw that he was in a reverie and disinclined to talk, said :

"I know what you are thinking about, MacGregor."

"Well, tell me then," he said.

"You are thinking about Tooty's handwriting."

"Yes," he said with a start, for he never could become used to her wonderful manifestations of clairvoyance. "But tell me more of my secret thoughts."

"You are sure that you have seen her handwriting before. And you know that I never brought any of it to you."

"Yes! that is the truth, Dream-child. But where have I seen it?"

"I don't know, MacGregor. You go on thinking, and let me sit still in your lap, and I will tell you where you saw it—that is, perhaps I will. If you can't remember, I can't tell you, for then it won't be inside of you, and that's where I find out."

"You strange little pussy," he said, "how can you read what is passing through my mind?"

The child's only response was by shaking her head from side to side in a mute negative. He knew then that she was unable to define her power, or the manner in which this insight came to her. Then he relapsed into his reverie. After a long time, Dream-child, who sat so still he fancied she was sleeping against his breast, said with animation :

"It's Nora's handwriting. Now you remember it."

At that very instant the truth had flashed upon him, and like an electric spark the recollection passed into the child's mind. And she had never heard of Nora. Yes! there could be no doubt of it. The chirography of Tooty and of the anonymous contributor to his paper were the same. He established at once the identity by taking from a package of letters a note signed "Nora," and comparing the two. Edith Graham was the author of "The Lost Will." A musician of rare gifts, and a writer of promise were under the same roof with him. They were one and the same person, as the governess of Dream-child.

"I want to know about that Lost Will that you are thinking about, MacGregor. What is a will?"

The child was still reading his thoughts. He explained to her what a will was, and then ended by reading the story of Nora to her. The little elf listened attentively after he had

told her that Tooty had written the story which he had caused to be printed in his paper. She was a patient listener, only occasionally interrupting the reading to inquire the meaning of difficult words and names that occurred in the story. When he had read the entire tale to her, she looked up to his face with her great, luminous, magnetic, brown eyes full of light, and pushing back her luxuriance of golden, floating hair with her pink fingers, said brightly :

"You are proud of my Tooty, aint you, MacGregor?"

"Yes, darling! That is exactly what I was thinking."

"I knew you were," she said. "You can't hide anything from Dream-child."

CHAPTER XIX.

*"Nature did ne'er so equally divide
A female heart 'twixt piety and pride:
Her waiting-maids prevent the peep of day,
And all in order, at her toilet, lay
Prayer-books, patch-boxes, sermon-notes, and paint,
At once t' improve the sinner and the saint."*

Chancellor Somers.

WHO yet has solved the mystery of influence? To what occult laws of matter or spirit is attributable the power to move a strong mind from its chosen channel, a channel selected by mature judgement, and to make it diverge into a path at absolute variance with its instincts, its prejudices, and its inclinations. The singular spectacle is often presented to the close observer of a superior mind led captive by an inferior. An intellect, capable of coping with the giants of politics, of law, or of literature, becomes the pliant tool of a weak woman, devoid of brains, but of winning suavity, and of infinite tact. Flattery, patent or covert, is deemed an adequate cause to produce this effect. But why, then, is a superior woman of admitted talent and beauty, and possessing in the intelligent

view of the mass of her acquaintances, infinite tact also, unable to influence the same mind, or to lead it in the palpable and easy path of common sense. The shallow woman, possessed of the suavity and the tact, can influence the strong intellect to its ruin, in spite of its adverse instincts; while the woman of real character, who has an equal measure of tact and suavity, and also what the other has not, intelligence, beauty, principle, and every other strong and graceful quality, is utterly powerless to exert any influence at all. The latter can influence two-thirds of the intellectual men of her circle, but cannot influence the one strong intellect who is led by the fool-woman. It is not the potent influence of mere passion, for often the existence of sensual passion is utterly wanting, and the man is as virtuous as a saint. But his judgment is perverted by the pernicious influence, so that he who is just to every one else, and was originally just to his children, becomes the actual foe of his children, not in avowed terms, not in conscious act, even, but practically their enemy. He does toward them now what he would not have done towards them for the world before. The fool-woman has intervened, and the kind father is not the kind father he was before. Once he was as impartial between his children as justice itself. Now he favors one to the detriment of the other. He is a judge upon the bench, and his inflexible honesty and impartiality are proverbs. What he is upon the bench he is among his children. Suddenly the fool-woman intervenes, takes the sceptre of excellent judgment from the upright judge, and he becomes upon the bench or in his family what he never was before, partial, prejudiced, partisan. What laws of matter or of mind are adequate to account for this? How can the woman with only tact outstrip the woman with equal tact and with every other attractive quality in addition? In the experience of nearly every observing mind this phenomenon of the great ruled by the little has occurred, and no satisfactory solution been rendered. An orator of moderate powers and imperfect cultivation influences the crowd, where an orator, superior to him in the estimation of the intelligence of the community,

utterly fails to draw them after him. He can draw the great but he cannot draw the little. How can the phenomenon be explained? Observation has probed the mystery and held up in her fingers to the light a glittering substance denominated *magnetic fluid*, a current of which circulates through the physical man, and passing from him through space, acts upon his fellow-man either through his physical system reaching his brain or by direct and instantaneous contact with his brain. This is mere theory advanced by able psychologists. But the phenomena are of such frequent occurrence and so palpable, that mind will delve for theories to account for them. The weaker does sometimes influence the stronger. The great, the perfect, the admirably balanced woman, who gathers to herself adoration of the most exquisite character from neighbors, friends, children and kindred, and merits it all, stoops to love in her refinement the gross, to be influenced in her admirable judgment by a man of weak brain, to associate with a physical, moral, and mental underling, a man totally unworthy of her in the combined judgment of the true, the great, and the lovable, who love and admire her. Is this not the overpowering influence of the stronger current of magnetic fluid in the underling working mysteriously upon her otherwise perfect being?

Reader, if you have never experienced these phenomena, commence to study what is occurring every day around you. You will soon discover the facts, whether or not you choose to accept the theory of explanation. Aye! more; look into your own life and surroundings, and see if you do not yourself sometimes choose the swine around you for your counsellors, instead of the princes of mind and matter, who are reaching forth to you appreciative arms every day. Surely the greater and the nobler should exert the most influence. Do they? If they do not in striking instances, how about the mysterious law of the *magnetic fluid*? Study the phenomena of personal influence, and see if the theory of magnetism may not be a plausible guide through the labyrinth of speculations.

Arthur Delancy fell into the power of a strange woman, de-

void of solid sense, as a star falls from its sparkling altitude. The instant they met for the first time he became subservient to her. A gentleman, by birth and instinct, he fell under the fascination of a plebeian. A scholar, he found agreeable society with one who was vapid, who could read and write, and perhaps occasionally volunteered a remark tinged with sense. She could expatiate by the hour upon the intricacies of ladies' toilets. She deemed heaven attained when Mrs. Shoddy invited her to ride in her elegant carriage. The possession of a fashionable livery and a handsome vehicle was the summit of success. To do and say, to dress and live, as the leaders of Fifth Avenue were supposed to do, say, live, and dress, were the pinnacles of life's triumphs. To be successful pecuniarily was manhood. To fail to reach the golden gates of wealth was imbecility; to devote life to the education of children; to love the poor and the unfortunate; to walk humbly, justly, and earnestly before God, or with a high and noble ambition in view; to live honestly, even if honesty conduced to ruin, were all weaknesses, all vanities. The possession of wealth and position was the true God to her. She would look coldly, haughtily upon the poor, and fawn eagerly upon those who were wealthy, or had the reputation of affluence. A family crest was a priceless star. A man who would assign all his property to protect his creditors was the worst of noodles. Surely such an extreme display of honesty was evidence of imbecility in any man. Hence she fled from every acquaintance who had suspended payment, or was reported to have done so. She bowed coldly to every widow whose changed quality of dress indicated that her husband had died overrated in his means of supporting his family. He might have been one of the most brilliant leaders of the bar. No matter; he had not left property. Her favorite expression to denote desirable acquaintances was "people of consideration;" which signified in her vocabulary people of means. She could expatiate rather enthusiastically upon the splendor of the Anglican ritual. But she never frequented a chapel where "people of consideration" did not

constitute the bulk of the worshippers. She could expatiate tenderly upon the duty of standing by people who were in trouble. But she did not mean *pecuniary* trouble. And here was the gate by which she entered the heart of Arthur Delancy. He had met her accidentally at a hotel before his arrest, and her pretty ways had fascinated him. He fancied upon this very brief acquaintance that she must be a very lovable and sterling woman; for she had said to him, in her pretty, gentle voice:

"I hear that you have just lost the Delancy Manor. If I were your friend, this is just the time I should stand by you."

The woman had that very day overheard an eminent lawyer remark, at the dinner-table, that Hartwell was suffering from a disease which his physician asserted would terminate his life-estate in the manor in three or four years, so that Arthur Delancy would not wait long for the reversion. Delancy knew nothing of this; and this volunteered sentiment of the strange lady was particularly acceptable to him at a moment when many "ladies of consideration" were beginning to look coldly upon the outgoing proprietor of the great estate. He never forgot that sentiment; and when, in the gloom attending his subsequent arrest for murder, this smiling woman actually gained access to him in the prison, and brought him such delicacies as her humble purse could afford, to testify her sympathy in his adversity, he was flattered, indeed. His vanity was touched by so marked evidences of his power over the feelings of a young and pretty woman. Before he was aware of the influence of this stranger, he found himself defending her to his mother and daughter as one to be commended for the alacrity with which she had flown to his assistance and comfort. But the two high-born ladies knew instinctively that she was an improper associate for Arthur Delancy, the elegant scholar and refined gentleman. It was evidence enough to them that she lacked refinement of feeling, that she intruded herself upon the prisoner after so brief an acquaintance as she had had with him at the hotel. No one

knew who the woman was, they argued with him. Even the gentleman who had introduced him knew her only from meeting her in the house of public entertainment. Who was she, they asked? Where did she come from, before her appearance at the hotel of the county town? Who had accompanied her, or was really well acquainted with her? In vain did they argue with him that it was unbecoming a gentleman to allow so frequent visits to him in the prison from this stranger, without satisfactory answers could be given to these questions. He was inexorable in his purpose of allowing this volunteer to visit him, and bring comforts to him; and finally she was established so firmly in his regard that her frequent visits to the prison became the subject of public gossip throughout the county.

But, like all men of strong will, he was not to be moved by the public comments which his mother and daughter brought to him daily regarding the strange lady. He stoutly maintained that as he was deserted by so many ladies of his own circle of society, since he had come to trouble, it was natural that he should receive gladly this new ally, who had come so sweetly and naturally to his defence. Finally, he insisted that his mother and daughter should call upon her and testify their sense of the lady's kindness to him. This they both declined to do without knowing more about her antecedents, whereat he was greatly incensed, and made use of expressions which gave them great mortification, and finally, after his acquittal, led to a fatal rupture between them. After he was discharged from custody he continued his intimacy with this stranger, who gave her name as Miss Backus, from a western city. She was apparently, so far as evidences of age could be traced in her features, at least past twenty-five. She informed Mr. Delancy that she was an orphan who had been left a small income by her father, and had come to the county town by the advice of a western physician, to drink the sulphur waters of the place for her health, which had been impaired by her long and arduous nursing of her father for months before his death. Upon this fee-

ble presentation of her claims to be received in society, utterly unsupported by other evidence than her own word, the clear-headed aristocrat and accomplished scholar, Arthur Delancy, allowed himself to become the friend and advocate of Miss Backus. The best society were annoyed at such violation of all caution in regard to a new-comer, and although they received him as usual, they would have nothing to do with his mysterious acquaintance and friend. But Marie and her proud old grandmother soon found that Arthur Delancy's fondness for Miss Backus only gained strength from the opposition he received in his efforts to introduce her to good society. At length the two ladies informed him that he was causing great scandal in the community by allowing a lady to visit him in his little home so frequently, when it was publicly known that his mother and daughter would not associate with her. He thereupon flew into a passion, and declared that every one was persecuting an orphan simply because she had possessed heart and courage to come to his help when he was a prisoner and in danger of his life. He declared that he would now marry his defender and friend, for it was evident that she was the only being on earth who cared enough for him to consider his feelings and tastes. This threat he speedily put in execution, and when he brought the lady one day to his home and announced her as his wife, Marie and her grandmother informed him that they could not live under the same roof with her.

Thus in the midst of misfortune, with the Delancy Manor in the hands of a strange race, with poverty staring them daily in the face, and with one half of the community prejudiced against them as suspected murderers of Hartwell, the Delancys quarrelled and separated. At the very time they should have stood together, like one will bent upon success, and strengthened each other in their daily efforts to earn their bread, they broke up and lived in towns remote from each other. Marie supported her aged grandmother, and Arthur Delancy, the finished gentleman, commenced the practice of law to support his shallow wife, who soon proved to have no aim in life except to court

up wealthy people and give them frequent reminders that in a few years she would be the mistress of the great Delancy Manor. When the *seven years* should have expired, which the law defines as the limit when the tenant for life disappears and cannot be found, she announced that Arthur Delancy would reënter the manor in splendid state, and that she was Mrs. Arthur Delancy. Thus had a kind father and a courteous and dutiful son vacated both positions, and become to Marie and her grandmother as a stranger, simply because a fool-woman had magnetized his strong brain and made him silly in the eyes of his neighbors and friends.

Marie Delancy found it no easy matter to descend from the position of mistress of the manor to that of a daily toiler for bread for herself and grandmother. But she would have incurred ten times her present load of cares and labors rather than live in the house with a step-mother, of whose history she could ascertain nothing, and who was neither refined nor dignified, nor an acquaintance whom ladies of her own class would seek. Her latent powers disclosed themselves, however, upon the emergency, and as her education had been perfect in both domestic and social accomplishments, she soon found that money came in slowly but surely upon her efforts. She would in time be independent of any one, and that was a luxury for one of her temperament almost equivalent to paradise. But the worst annoyance she experienced in her battle with the world for subsistence was the dissatisfaction of her grandmother. Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was ever harping upon the one subject, of the heir which she feared Arthur Delancy's wife would bear to him, and which she apprehended would forever keep Marie out of the proprietorship of the estate. She assured her granddaughter that such women ever intrigue to advance their own children, at the sacrifice of the rights of every human being. There was peculiar poignancy in these suggestions for Miss Delancy. The manor had been her pride, and at one time it seemed that her claim as the sole heir was beyond question. Now, storms had arisen, and the poor girl saw her father estranged from her,

her grandmother unhappy, and her own life one unceasing struggle for bread. Far away in the future, the beautiful dream of regaining her lovely old home had made her buoyant in the life-struggle. But these startling suggestions of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy came upon her like icy fingers, and she suffered with the mortification and pride which she could not shake off. But at last she regained the outward appearances of composure, and avoided the subject whenever it was introduced. She endeavored to make her impatient and ambitious old grandmother comfortable, and to seek consolation for her trials and cares in the religion which she professed. Heroic and noble, she held on her way, and her final self-control became so perfect that Mrs. Jourdan Delancy ceased to annoy her and wondered if happiness was indeed attained by her grandchild. But over the life of the old lady a heavy cloud hung ominously ever, and in its mysterious influence there was little wonder that she forgot Miss Delancy's troubles, and fancied her content. She was often alone, and at such times the secrets she was hiding from all eyes caused the terror to gleam in her dark eyes, and the clutch of agony to hold her aged heart. She was thinking of the scenes which had filled the last days at the old manor with horror. Too well she remembered the gliding of *the black mask* through the ancient halls, the death-cry of the struggling victim, the snow-storm, and the bag of gold she had flung from the window to *the white mask*. She knew that her name was infamous throughout the county, and that even in the retired village where she now sojourned, the people had heard the suspicions regarding her complicity in the affair. Eyes, curious and sinister, were often gazing at the windows where she chanced to look out. She had to withdraw into the rear of the little cottage her grandchild had hired, to avoid the impertinent eyes which seemed ever to be watching her. Though her son had many friends who openly acquitted him of the charge of murder, there seemed very few who could forget that *the black mask* had entered her bedchamber and been there locked in, as if in communication and complicity with her.

Finally Miss Delancy received a letter from the city, informing her of opportunities to earn a larger income than she was then obtaining. After consultation with her grandmother, it was decided that she should accept the proposals of her friend, and make the city her home. Marie secured the services of a servant-maid to take care of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, and then promising to mail a certain amount of money every month, and visit the little country home twice a year, she departed alone into the world. Faithfully did the intrepid young lady face the discouragements of obtaining a support in the metropolis, and every month came the welcome instalment of her wages to the post-office of the village for her grandmother. Every week, too, came the letter of affection, over which the old lady wept with mingled joy and bitterness. To her solitary life that grandchild was her all, and the ambition which once had been her personal incitement to intrigue, now was transferred to another object. She was now ambitious for that lovely being who toiled for her, and in whose features and strength of character she recognized a worthy representative of the old will and energy of the Delancy family. How keen was the sting to her pride in the reflection that the upstart wife of Arthur Delancy would, in a few years, reign at the old manor-house, where her queenly Marie ought to reign. Occasionally the relatives of the old lady visited her, bringing her tokens of their regard, and testifying to their recollections of her kindness when she had been enthroned in the seat of power at the manor. To each and all of her blood relatives who thus remembered her, she said: "Wait. I am old, but you shall yet see me restored to power. My Marie shall yet be an acknowledged queen of the society to which her birth entitles her. You don't know yet the terrible will that lurks in the blood of the Delancy family. Wait. The blood with which I am allied will yet triumph." Her relatives pitied the old lady, and fancied she was growing weak in mind from old age and from disappointed pride. And so the months went on, while Marie toiled far away, and Mrs. Jourdan Delancy waited alone with

her servant in the humble cottage. There seemed to remain one comfort to the solitary old woman, which almost compensated her for the loss of Marie's society. It was something saved from the wreck of Arthur Delancy's household goods. When everything else seemed to fall under the control of the Hartwell family at the time of the transfer of possession of the estate to them, the old lady had begged hard of her son to allow her to be the custodian of the portrait of his father. He had yielded to her solicitations, and there it hung now in the little cottage where she lived with her servant. There from the walls ever looked down upon her the likeness of the proud, intellectual statesman of the Delancy family. She was ever looking up to that dark face, and studying the firm lines about his mouth, when she felt the need of strength near her. When solitude and poverty seemed to hang with a darker gloom around her, she knew that her soul gained fortitude by the contemplation of that face. Yes, that veteran soldier and irresistible political partisan, in whom she had ever trusted, seemed to have left his iron will in the portrait to buoy her up when trouble lowered. The square, rigid contour of his face was similar to that of Arthur Delancy. When, oh! when would the son shake off the alliance so unworthy of his race, and turn again to his child, his Marie, his daughter, so worthy of any Delancy's regard and affection? But whatever fate might lead astray her son, and make him forget his blood, his race, nothing could ever rob her of the memory of the tenderness, the pride, the strength of Jourdan Delancy. How majestically about this man, born to command, hung the dark velvet coat, lined and collared with sables. How indignantly would the unkempt mass of silver-gray hair upon that head shake at the announcement that his intellectual son had wedded with a nonentity, a woman devoid of refinement and of dignity.

The seasons chased away each other, snow followed upon the heels of autumn, and spring again awoke upon the earth. But day by day the reflecting, waiting, ambitious old woman

pursued her solitary routine, and dreamed of Marie and her son, and shuddered over the memory of the murder. But above all her meditations, a star was ever lurking. She believed firmly in the gratitude of one man. There was a mysterious face which ever haunted her. The man to whom she had flung the bag of gold would yet return. She doubted him not. The trust of woman is almost miraculous. There is a touch of sublimity about it. Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, in her old age, and with all her experience of the hollowness of human motives, still believed in one man's promises. This belief alone buoyed her above despair. Upon this belief she hung her hopes of triumphing over the woman who had stolen away her son's affections from her and from Marie. One night in the early spring, she was looking eagerly for Marie's monthly letter containing the regular remittance of money for her support. Her supply of fuel was exhausted, and the money was of urgent necessity to her. She had despatched her servant to the office for her mail. If it failed to arrive, she would have to write to her kin for a loan. This was a painful alternative. Presently, in the darkness where she sat alone, footsteps sounded, doubtless those of the servant. Yes, the girl had a letter for her. A light was struck, but the handwriting upon the letter was not that of her grandchild. Strange to her, also, appeared the little packet which accompanied the letter by mail. She sent away the servant, drew the lamp near to her, and read the missive. She had never seen the chirography before. The letter referred her for further explanation to the accompanying packet. She tore it open with trembling hands, and found that a tiny box of paper was enclosed in it. This she opened, and something sparkling fell from it. She held it up to the lamp. It flashed brilliantly. A thrill swept through her aged veins. The man had been grateful. She was not deceived in him. The White Mask had sent her the means of triumph over her foes, perfect triumph.

CHAPTER XX.

*"Sing on; before me gardens rise,
 Rich with their scented bowers;
 Once more each vanished footstep flies
 O'er verdant paths of flowers;
 I hear light laughter on the breeze,
 See garlands wreath the beechen trees."*

Catherine Ann Warfield.

THE *élite* of the musical world were in a flutter of excitement. An edict had gone forth from the "New York Constitution." The cultivated, the refined, and the musical at once gave ear, and the fashionable were forced to listen in consequence. The journal *par excellence* of the musical artists of the metropolis had announced a new star, had pronounced definitely and authoritatively upon her merits, and he was a bold man who would dare to controvert the musical taste and judgment of this leading critic. The multitude knew only that the "Constitution" had spoken. The artists and the initiated knew that the critical pen was wielded by MacGregor. The leader of the opera at the Academy glanced over the article, recognized the inimitable style and lucid reasoning of the man who had so often filled his pockets by a few dashes of the pen, and had as often depleted them. He saw that there was no vague generalization, no adroit evasion, no effort to let a singer down easily from pure human kindness because she was a woman. He knew that MacGregor had heart, and sometimes allowed female pretenders to escape from the footlights without having every bone in them broken by his satire. No! there was no halting, merciful lease of musical life renewed here. It was no encouraging hint that time might develop a prima donna. It was downright praise, almost exultant praise of a rising star. The words of approbation, as they were traced throughout the entire column of the paper, were calculated to thrill all readers, and arouse the most intense anxiety to hear the stranger sing. She was designated as a vocalist of transcendent power and sweetness, who was

only partially cognizant of her real gifts as yet, and was singing on the Avenue, from the pure love of her Church, and without receiving one dollar of compensation. She was contrasted with the famous singers of the day, and the opinion was given, without reserve, that if some competent manager would provide her with the means and opportunity of preparing her voice for the stage, she would prove a mine of wealth to him.

The leader of the opera stroked his long, black beard, and read the article again. His dark eyes shone with unwonted brilliancy as he concluded the perusal of the eulogy. It signified money to a man of nerve and rapid execution. In two hours after the article met his eye, he was standing beside MacGregor, and begging for an introduction to Edith Graham.

"I have been impressed by your criticism," he said, "and if you will present me to the young lady, I will test her qualities at once. Where does she reside?"

"On the same floor with me, in this building," was the response. "You have done well to call; and if you will bring her out before the public, I will back you with all the influence of my paper."

"Ah! Mr. MacGregor," was the response of the delighted manager, "I know too well the value of that promise. Had I been backed by you in every effort I have made to please the public, I should now be a rich man."

"There is time enough yet for that, Mr. Matzek. If you bring this young lady properly before the public, your fortune is made."

"Present me to her at once, if you please," replied the manager. "You are no sciolist in anything that you ever pretend to know about."

MacGregor smiled, and turned to ring the bell. In a few minutes the landlady was ushered into the room by the servant, and the manager was presented to her. The proposition to allow Mr. Matzek to hear Miss Graham sing in the parlor of the house was assented to with avidity.

"Will you, too, join the party?" inquired the landlady of the editor.

"Certainly," was the reply. "I have taken up the cause of Miss Graham, and I shall expect to watch her progress all through."

"That will be a novelty in this house, Mr. MacGregor. Were you ever in our parlor?"

"Oh! yes; once or twice; but I shall be a recluse no longer. Dream-child has been lecturing me upon the bear element in my character, and as she is a despot, I have no alternative but to seek society once more. I thought once that I should never enter it again."

He said this with a dash of the old vivacity which had once been his peculiar charm when off duty. Then he said, with a merry twinkle in his eye :

"I really have some curiosity to see the guardian of my child. I never met her face to face but once, and then I was so pre-occupied with business recollections, that I really did not gain a very definite idea of her person. Strange to say, I have a pretty good idea of her character from Dream-child, who chatters about her incessantly, and seems to read people like a little witch."

While they were talking, the landlady was leading the way, through the upper hall and down the stairs, to the parlor. She opened the piano, and while she disappeared to summon her sister, the leader of the opera amused himself by testing the merits of the instrument. MacGregor withdrew into a retired corner of the apartment, and seating himself in the recess of a window awaited the advent of Miss Graham. Now that time, and new objects of affection, had to a certain extent blunted the keenness of his agony, he realized how singular his conduct must have appeared to all the inmates of the boarding-house. He had passed in and out for months, as totally oblivious of the presence of other inmates, as if he had been blind and deaf. He had been so long struggling to crush the demon in him, aroused by cruelty and desertion, that he had forgot-

ten there was a little world of humanity living and speculating under the same roof with him. He had at times apprehended the loss of his reason, so great had been the shock and disappointment of seeing his little family forever wrecked. None can comprehend this violent brain-agony, save those who feel intensely, and know what it is to find their best and purest efforts for their families misconstrued, and themselves left mercilessly alone in the ruins of a home. To believe in the fidelity of a wife, to love her, struggle for her, and then be abandoned by her, without a warning note, is to some loving and earnest natures the greatest and most startling calamity possible in life. To believe in an angel, and to awake to the reality of a devil, has many a time put strong men in a mad-house. MacGregor, when once aroused by treachery, was violence personified. He felt the maddening torrents of agony press upon his brain when he was deserted. The fearful reflection came to him, "I am going mad. Have I not character enough to keep out of an asylum?" Day after day he struggled with himself to keep his hands clean of the blood of the false-hearted demon-wife who had robbed him of all. He shuddered at the violence of his own tumultuous thoughts, and realized that they tended to murder and insanity. He struggled fearfully for self-mastery. It came to him at last; and when he realized his final safety, he saw that he had been a singular being for months to the people who had lived under the same roof with him. His old, genial, warm-hearted self had come back. The true, noble MacGregor, scarred and lonely, but a true man still, had returned from the depths of despair to the sunlight of hope once more. And the moment he commenced again to serve others, he found that God began to smile upon him as of yore. Dream-child put up her tiny hand and opened the door of his heart to human sympathies. Once opened, that heart of its own noble instinct distended to receive all human sympathies. He was now ready and willing to aid the teacher of Dream-child, because the little girl loved her. For the sake of the child he would love the friends of the child. But the

best friend of the child now glided in to speak for herself. Edith Graham, bewildered by the eulogy in the "Constitution," which she had read that morning, and realizing in a vague, half-ecstasy, the crown which was suspended above her head, entered the parlor, and greeted the manager, who had called upon her. MacGregor, from his covert, noted her tall figure, her cheek flushed with excitement, and her dark-brown, lustrous eyes, full of light. The elegance of her carriage made as instantaneous an impression upon him, as upon the manager, who detected with delight this essential element for stage effect. The editor realized that she was very beautiful and patrician in her ease and manner. He advanced from the recess of the window, after allowing her first to address the leader of the opera. He was like an apparition to her, for she had looked in the wrong direction, expecting to see him enter by the door. As she turned towards him, at the sound of his voice in greeting, he noticed that she was agitated, doubtless, from the emotions aroused in her by his article in the "Constitution," and the almost miraculous influence it had exerted in sending Matzek to her. There was certainly a faint tremor in her voice, as she said :

"You have been so kind. You have over-estimated me, out of the goodness of your heart."

"I don't think so, Miss Graham," he responded with dignity. "My heart has nothing to do with my musical criticisms. I tell the public truths. At least, I endeavor to do so."

"He is right," said Matzek. "Mr. MacGregor wouldn't praise his own sister unless she deserved it. I think he is hard-hearted. But if you will be kind enough to point out in that pile of music any operas with which you are familiar, and will sing while I play for you, we shall soon know what all this enthusiasm of Mr. MacGregor amounts to."

"Undoubtedly that is the best way to test my musical judgment, Miss Graham," said the editor. "Give Mr. Matzek an opportunity to judge for himself."

The young lady turned her eyes upon the face of the last

speaker, so calm and handsome, as if she had not expected such cold tones to come from a man who wielded such an enthusiastic pen. Her eyes seemed in that one full gaze, the first she had ever really had into his face, to penetrate to the man's soul. His eyes belied his manner. They were full of soul. Suffering had tempered enthusiasm. He was only half recovered to the world yet. Perhaps she made allowances for him, for she said, turning to select from the piles of music some opera to test her powers by :

"You two are so solemn about it that you are enough to frighten any girl."

Her tone was frolicsome, and set every one at their ease at once. MacGregor smiled, and said :

"You will ruin the solemn in both of us, rest assured, when you get to work. We are both devotees at music's shrine, and our solemnity is only eagerness. I am going into yonder corner, as is my wont. But I shall hear every note, believe me."

And so he retired into the recess of the window just as Matzek commenced to play the selections from the Opera of Faust, which Miss Graham placed before him. The instrument seemed to be satisfactory to the leader, for presently his superb voice burst forth in song. Then came the test of the music teacher's qualities, and with ease and perfect control of her voice she launched forth upon the ebbing and flowing sea of melody. Again and again came the wonderful voice to its task, or rather to its revel, and the fingers of Matzek seemed to partake of the magnetism which was working upon his ear. His hands beat exultantly the keys buoying up the woman's voice, and presently the smile of rapture stole over his lips as she responded to every expectation of his exquisite ear. In the tests of power and continuity of sound she was at home, and still his voice and eager hands called for more, more. Away darted the bird-voice heavenward, thrilling, sweet, divine, and over the face of the manager stole inspiration as he listened. No heights too exalted, too sweet, for her ; no graceful transfor-

mations too wonderful. Away, away travelled the divine gift upon its mission, until Matzek dropped his hands from the keys with the exclamation :

"You are an angel. Great God ! how you can sing. Sing for me in the opera, and you will make me a rich man, and yourself a rich woman. Aye ! more : you will win a fame for both hemispheres. Do you hear me ? You are perfectly magnificent."

"Every word of that is truth," called out the voice of MacGregor from the recess of the window. "Am I a judge of music now, Matzek ?"

"Aye, you are a judge," was the response. "And I only wonder that some of the people who worship in that church have not before this sounded the praises of this nightingale. Miss Graham, take this chair. Dictate your terms to me. I am the slave of your voice. You will be famous."

The countenance of the beautiful girl was radiant as she replied :

"Fame is nothing to me. There are loved ones dependent upon my efforts. Give me but the means to make these comfortable and happy, and you may bestow the fame upon those who value such gewgaws."

The voice was calm, and at the same time thrilling, which pronounced these words.

"Ah ! my dear young lady," exclaimed the manager. "How happy I am to tell you that your loved ones are going to have every comfort that reasonable people can demand. I offer you now twelve thousand dollars for the exclusive use of your voice for one year at the Academy of Music. Will you accept this proposition ?"

"Is that a good offer for me, Mr. MacGregor ? I am but a novice in these matters."

The gentleman appealed to now came forward from the window and advised her to close with the manager upon this basis at once.

"If your success," he said, "is as great as I anticipate, you

will command more than this after the first year. But this is reasonable now."

"I will take up with this offer," she said, after a brief reflection, "if it will not interfere with my custody of Dream-child. I have become very much attached to her, and do not like to give her up."

"Neither do I want you to give her up," said the editor. "Accept this offer and still remain her guardian."

"Very well," she replied. "Your wishes are paramount, for I owe this introduction to success to you alone. Mr. Matzek, I accept your offer. What now is to be your programme?"

"I will send Mr. Albates every day to train your voice for the requirements of the Academy. At what hour will you be at leisure?"

"At eleven in the morning, for I shall now of course give up my classes."

"Certainly you must," said the leader. "You will have no time or strength for other duties when Albates takes you in hand, I assure you."

"Excepting only Dream-child," she interposed.

"Certainly," he said. "But what a strange name for a child."

"It is fanciful," said the editor. "But that is neither here nor there. Now, Matzek, define the times of payment of this twelve thousand dollars. This lady must know little of business matters, and it is well to let her know exactly upon what she can depend."

"I will pay her one thousand dollars at the end of every month, from this date."

"That is satisfactory," she said.

"Shall I draw up a contract for you, Miss Graham, to that effect?" said the editor. "It is always wise to define our obligations in writing."

"I would be much obliged to you, if you would," she said. "Will this be satisfactory also to you, Mr. Matzek?"

"Oh! yes. It is a simple matter. Let this gentleman draw up the papers for us to sign."

Everything being arranged, the manager, with every indication of gratification at the result, bowed himself out, and the two were left alone. The editor, however, manifested no signs of his customary haste to escape from the society of women. He begged Miss Graham to be seated on the sofa near him, as he had an important communication to make to her. Surprised by a warmth of manner which she had failed to detect in him before, she acquiesced, and sat down near him.

"Fate," he said, "has decided that my pen shall be employed in advancing the interest of a stranger. You are a stranger, though so long under the same roof with me. I have been a sufferer in life; no matter for what cause. That suffering has isolated me from my fellow-creatures for a time, and I must have appeared eccentric, or like a misanthrope. I am neither. The shadow upon my life is not so dark as it was. I shall henceforth endeavor to act more in accordance with the regulations of society and social demands. Dream-child has been wisely and kindly treated by you. Hence my disinclination to part with you. The child loves you. For God's sake, do not suffer any amount of success to estrange you from her. She needs you, and I cannot devote time to her training or education."

"I will never part from her, if I can avoid it, Mr. MacGregor," she said, wondering what the strange, handsome, isolated being before her had detained her for now.

"Thank you for that renewed assurance, Miss Graham," he said. "Now, I will inform you why I wished you to remain with me after Mr. Matzek's departure. You will soon be the cynosure of the public. You will be criticised by all classes of men and women, and by newspaper critics of every grade, from slanderers to gentlemen. Your personal appearance, your dress, your manners, your antecedents, and your associates, will be remorselessly dragged before the public by the critics. You have accepted public notoriety from heroic motives, to aid

loved ones dependent upon you.' Hence, you will develop firmness. The lines of that quality are in your face. I am going to break through all reserve proper between strangers as we are, and take a liberty with you, the liberty of advising you. May I?"

"Can you doubt," she said, steadily regarding him, "that I will listen to the advice of one who has incontestably proved his good-will towards me by his powerful pen?"

He contemplated her for a moment, weighing his words before they were irrevocable, then he said:

"Take my advice, then, as well-meant, even if not acceptable to you. Do not go before the public under false colors."

She started, looked at him, regained her composure, and said, with slight *hauteur*.

"Our acquaintance can scarcely justify Mr. MacGregor in asserting anything positively regarding my true colors."

"Our acquaintance certainly cannot justify it. But I am giving advice upon your encouragement. And I really desire to see you the first of musical stars. Listen to me. The public will do you more justice if you throw yourself utterly upon their human nature. If they find that you have deceived them, no matter from what excellent and sensitive motives, they will be merciless, and expect new deceits. Therefore, I say to you, go fearlessly before the public, not as Miss Edith Graham, but as *Miss Marie Delancy*, without disguise, and with the impress of honor which that noble name carries with it."

The young lady changed color. He had mysteriously penetrated her secret. But the frank, open manner of the gentleman, and his bias in her favor, constrained her to speak freely.

"You have the possession of my secret, and some one has betrayed me. I assumed this name simply because I feared my own name might militate against my struggles for bread. Oh! you cannot know what a storm of abuse has fallen upon my family."

"I know it all," he said. "I comprehend your motives, and sympathize with them. In the limited area of your patrons and

your music classes, doubtless your adoption of a disguise was wise and natural. But you are going into public assemblies, where you will be recognized most certainly by some of your old acquaintances. Therefore, I say, boldly throw your real name to the winds. There is not a man or woman who will condemn you for charges brought against your father. The very fact that his pecuniary misfortunes have brought you to the footlights will enlist the sympathies of the true and the generous in your behalf. But if you sing under the name of Edith Graham, the public will say that you are ashamed of the name of Delancy."

"How, in the name of the marvellous, have you become acquainted with the history of my family and of myself?"

"By the most simple process," he said. "Do you remember meeting, in the jewelry shop of Hall, Blue & Co., a sailor?"

"Certainly. The one who sent the parrot to Dream-child," she said, growing more surprised every instant.

"That sailor has called upon me to-day, and left some exquisite coral jewelry for Dream-child, to whom he has taken a wonderful fancy. He refused to see her for the singular reason that he is afraid of her. He says that, during the brief time she was sitting in his lap in that shop, she told him some of his secret thoughts; that she is a wonderful clairvoyant, and that he has some matters which he desires to keep from men. Hence he avoids her, though very fond of her. But the most singular part of the affair is this: He told me the whole history of your father, and declared him to be perfectly innocent, and expressed the firm conviction of his mind that your father did not even know who the murderer of Hartwell was. He said, too, that you were as innocent as your father of any complicity in the affair, and that only one inmate of the manor-house could possibly have known who the real murderer was. He would not explain how he came to know the family affairs so thoroughly. But he said he would put in the hands of the police, soon, something they were very anxious to possess, in connection with the disappearance of Hartwell. He told me that he

recognized you instantly, in the show-room of Hall, Blue & Co., as Miss Marie Delancy; that he had followed you lately through the city, ascertained your daily employment, your assumed name, and your position of chief singer in the church. In fact, the man appeared to know everything about you. He stated, moreover, that you had recently sold the gold watch given you by your father, in order to provide some additional comforts for your grandmother, whom you were supporting. He said that he had saved up money from his nautical expeditions more than sufficient for his wants; and, as he knew your grandmother, and she had once done him a great pecuniary service, he left with me a bag of gold, which he desired you to send to her. I have that bag now in my room, awaiting your orders. He gave me, also, for you, the gold watch which you had sold in your necessity, and which he had purchased, and he begged me to present it to you, with the compliments of an old sailor, to whom you had been courteous in the show-room of Hall, Blue & Co. And here is the watch now."

He produced from his vest pocket, and handed to his amazed companion, the watch she had parted with in her extremity of poverty, to raise funds for her grandmother.

"Am I audacious, now," he inquired, "in recognizing you as Miss Delancy, and in advising you to go before the public boldly?"

"This is my watch, and I am Miss Delancy. Who is this sailor?"

She looked down upon the carpet in deep thought. She was delving into the past for a solution of the mystery.

CHAPTER XXI.

*"Of richest workmanship, before him placed,
A lily wrought in gold the table graced,
From whose proud top a bright, translucent stone,
A diamond of wondrous beauty shone."*

Realm of the Fairy Morgana.



R. BLUE, of the firm of Hall, Blue & Co., was interrupted one morning, while answering his correspondents, by a clerk, who informed him that there was an old lady in the shop who desired a private interview with him.

"Show her into this room," was the response.

"Yes, sir," said the clerk. "But she has a friend with her—a gentleman, whom she wishes to accompany her."

"Very well," said Mr. Blue; "show them both in here."

The clerk left the private office on his mission, and Mr. Blue turned to warm himself at the coal fire in the grate; for the spring chill was still lingering over the city. Presently the two strangers were ushered into his presence by the clerk, who shut the door leading into the great show-room, and left the trio alone.

Mr. Blue saw his visitors comfortably seated before the glowing coals, and then stood with his arm resting upon the mantel-piece, awaiting the announcement of the business which had occasioned the visit.

"You do not recognize me, Mr. Blue," said the old lady. "I was once a well-known customer of your house."

"Madame," replied the courteous proprietor, bowing respectfully to the penetrating black eyes which were studying him, "I am very much honored by your presence; for, if my memory fails me not, you are—you are the widow of the distinguished Jourdan Delancy. Why, certainly! how could I be so blind as not to remember the face? I am truly glad to see you. And you were, indeed, a well-known customer, and a liberal one, too, of the firm of Hall, Blue & Co."

"This is my friend, Counsellor Hafer," she said, introducing a portly gentleman of forty, with brilliant dark-blue eyes, intellectual countenance, a light-brown mustache, and an erect manner, almost haughty. In the free, independent, and restless bearing of the man, the jeweller remembered at once, now that his name was pronounced, one of the ablest of the younger members of the New York bar, whose skill as a forensic pleader was known throughout the State. The face of the eminent jurist was slightly florid, and his brown hair closely cut. His eyes roved rapidly around the apartment, as he sat with his right foot raised to warm it at the grate.

As Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was commencing to disclose the object of her visit, the lawyer abruptly broke into her conversation, thus :

"You had better let me take the initiative of this business, Mrs. Delancy. There is a good deal of technical knowledge required in regard to such purchases."

"Very well, Mr. Hafer," said the old lady. "You make the advances as your judgment prompts."

"Well, then, Mr. Blue," said the lawyer, "bring us, for our inspection, the largest solitaire diamonds you have in your establishment. It matters little whether they are in ear-rings, brooches, or pins. So that they are solitaire stones of great size, you may bring us anything."

"You wish to make a selection, I suppose, of large stones for a set of jewelry?" said Mr. Blue.

"No matter at present what our object is," said the lawyer. "Bring us your largest diamonds, your most valuable stones of the first water."

"All right, sir," replied the delighted jeweller, and he passed out into the great show-room. After a time he returned with several morocco cases containing solitaires, and placed them upon a centre-table, to which his visitors drew up their chairs, and entered at once into the inspection of the flashing treasures. Mr. Blue spread out upon the table a piece of black velvet about a foot in diameter, and said :

"That will bring out the full brilliancy and beauty of the stones, as you place them upon it. Now, here are my four largest diamonds, set, as you see, in a temporary fillet of gold, just to exhibit them. I doubt if I shall find a purchaser for them in this country. Probably their great value will require me to send them to some one of the crowned heads of Europe. Can anything be more exquisitely beautiful?"

The four brilliants sparkled with wonderful fires as the jeweller placed them side by side upon the black velvet, and then stood back a little from the table, to enable his visitors to watch the full play of their magnificent light. The old lady and her companion eagerly examined the four, asking innumerable questions about their weight and value.

"Their weight together," said the courteous proprietor, "is exactly the weight of the famous 'Halphen's Star of the South.' That weighs two hundred and forty-four carats. If, now, I could by some magician's art blend these four stones into one, the value of my treasure would be immense. If into one great stone those four diamonds could be transformed, that would be something worth owning."

"How much would you value the 'Halphen's Star of the South' at, Mr. Blue?" inquired the lawyer, looking up.

"Why, if I were to offer it to a crowned head," was the response, "I don't know what I could get for it. I should grade my charge for it, rest assured, upon the wealth and extent of the kingdom he ruled, and the wealth he individually could command.

The lawyer laughed heartily, and said: "There's candor for you, Mrs. Delancy, anyway. But, Mr. Blue, what do you think you could afford to give in hard cash for these four diamonds transformed into one?"

"I would give *two millions of dollars*," he answered, emphatically.

"That is a great deal of money to raise in these hard times, Mr. Blue," said Mrs. Delancy.

"I know it," was the response. "But if I had that diamond

to gain possession of, I could soon borrow enough to make up the two millions, and gladly would I jump at the offer. Why, madame, if I had a diamond as large as those four together, I would take the next steamer for Europe, and when I came back I would retire from business."

Counsellor Hafer gave a quick glance at the old lady. She nodded assent to what she believed his look signified. Then he said :

"Mr. Blue, it may or may not be known to you that the Delancy family have lost possession of the manor."

"I have heard that the old family of Delancy had been unfortunate, and no one regretted it more than I," said the jeweller.

"Well, Mr. Blue," continued the lawyer, "a singular circumstance has put in the hands of Mrs. Delancy the most wonderful remedy for misfortune. And I wish, before proceeding to disclose to you the especial object of our visit to-day, to request of you, in consideration of a barter we propose to make with you, that you will give your word as a gentleman and an honorable merchant, that our transaction with you to-day shall never be disclosed to any person except your partners. We wish you to promise for yourself and for your partners that no one else shall know of the parties who deal with you in this matter."

"Most assuredly, I will promise, Mr. Hafer. Such promises are not uncommon in business."

"Then we can rely upon your secrecy, Mr. Blue?"

"Undoubtedly," was the response.

"Very good," said the lawyer. "Now, Mr. Blue, be kind enough to produce your diamond scales."

"They are close at hand," said the jeweller, going to his writing-desk, unlocking it, and taking out an exquisitely delicate pair of silver scales, which he placed upon the table before his visitors.

"Now be good enough, Mr. Blue," said the lawyer, "to weigh these four diamonds together, and point out to us the re-

sult upon these scales, so that we may observe the whole process."

The jeweller drew up another chair to the table, and sitting between his customers proceeded to weigh the four brilliants, while they closely watched his movements. He had taken the stones out of their fillets for the purpose.

"There, you see the result," he said, when he had finished the operation. "Two hundred and forty-four carats, just as I told you. I have weighed them several times before now."

"And you say, Mr. Blue, that one brilliant, equal to these in color, and weighing as much as all of them together, is worth two millions of dollars."

"That was not exactly what I said, Mr. Hafer," responded the jeweller. "I said that I would *give* two millions of dollars."

"Ah! yes. That is a proper distinction," said the lawyer. "The real value, and what you will give, are necessarily two entirely different matters. You will give two millions, and some king or potentate will have to give you a handsome advance upon that sum."

"Unquestionably," said Mr. Blue, with a smile. "Jewellers must make their profits as well as lawyers. But this is talking of impossibilities. We must deal together in diamonds of moderate size. Now, what does Mrs. Delancy propose to do about these diamonds? We will sell her one, or all of the four, at prices as favorable as any other diamond house in this city."

"You do not comprehend our attitude," interposed Mrs. Delancy. "We are not here as purchasers, Mr. Blue."

"Ah!" was the monosyllabic response.

"Go on," said the lawyer. "You can conclude the matter now, Mrs. Delancy. You have the way clear before you. A diamond that weighs two hundred and forty-four carats will command in this establishment two millions of dollars."

"Impossible!" ejaculated Mr. Blue. "You cannot mean to say that in this country there is accessible to me a brilliant as large as 'Halphen's Star of the South.' He looked from

one to the other of his companions to discover what all this parley signified.

The lawyer flung back his light overcoat from his breast, and scanned the features of Mr. Blue, to witness the effect of the forthcoming disclosure. In the meantime Mrs. Delancy had taken from her reticule a delicate lace handkerchief, a relic of better days, and untying the knot she had made in the corner of it, disclosed a ball of white tissue paper. Opening out this ball of paper, a large diamond fell glittering upon the piece of black velvet on the table, before the eyes of the jeweller. The four large diamonds of Mr. Blue immediately became dwarfs. So dazzlingly beautiful was this king of diamonds, so peerless and lovely in its white splendor, flashing incessant fires, that the representative of the house of Hall, Blue & Co. was utterly dumb. He discredited the evidence of his senses. But every movement of his face from side to side revealed a new brilliancy in the marvellous stone. It was a real, true, genuine first-water brilliant, such as monarchs wear, and multitudes worship. Out of the great laboratory of nature, God had evolved it, and imprisoned in it the hues of the rainbow forever. And as it lay there, flashing gloriously upon the dark velvet, all eyes were bent upon it. Oh! the power for good or evil that rested in that stone, whose first valuation was two millions of dollars. It was a thing to be watched jealously by day and by night. It would rouse the fearlessness of lions in the hearts of robbers, could they but come within reach or knowledge of it. It was potent to corrupt men and women, to bribe judges, to ruin the virtue of the priests beside their altars, and to make the creature defy the warnings of the Creator.

"This is the work of enchantment!" exclaimed the jeweller, at length regaining his professional self-control.

"No!" said Mrs. Delancy. "It is the hand of God, stretched forth to aid a poor, aged widow, and her son, and her grandchild. It is a genuine diamond, and if it weighs two hundred and forty-four carats, the house of Hall, Blue & Co. may have it for two millions of dollars, and not one cent less. We

have your estimate, Mr. Blue, of the value of a stone that weighs that much."

"Yes!" said the jeweller, now full of covetousness and secret joy, for he saw that the diamond was more brilliant than his own lovely four. "I will not go back of my own estimate. Let us weigh it."

He took up the representative of two millions between his thumb and finger, and dropped it upon one of the scales, placing in the other scale his own four brilliants.

"Wonder of wonders!" he exclaimed; "they just balance: look! Yes. I will give you, Mrs. Delancy, two millions of dollars for this stone before the end of a week. See! they just balance. Could anything be more extraordinary? Where did you find this?"

Mrs. Delancy said, fixing her black eyes upon his face:

"No man can know that while I am on this side of the grave. Proceed with your negotiation for the diamond, but ask me no more questions of that nature."

There was that in her tone and manner which silenced at once all impertinent inquiry.

"All right, madame," he said. "Secrecy shall characterize this transaction in every respect. Now do you say that I shall have the diamond for two millions?"

"I do say so, sir; and Mr. Hafer will draw up a contract for us."

"How much cash down will you give?" inquired the lawyer.

"Five hundred thousand dollars. I will give Mrs. Delancy my check for that amount now. The balance I will give her a note for signed by our firm name, and payable in two weeks from this date at the National Bank."

"That is satisfactory," said Mr. Hafer. "Give me some paper, and I will draw up a contract here, and we will close this matter at once. Utter silence is enjoined, you recollect, upon yourself and partners."

"Certainly," said Mr. Blue, as he hastened to provide writing materials for the lawyer.

The contract was soon drawn and signed, and Mrs. Delancy and her companion walked out of the building, carrying with them the check for five hundred thousand dollars, and the note of Hall, Blue & Co. for one million and a half dollars more.

In two weeks from the date of this transaction, Arthur Delancy, attorney and counsellor-at-law, was rapidly and nervously pacing the floor of his law-office in a country town. This unfortunate gentleman had been gradually working his way up in his new profession. He had received a legal education in his youth, and soon found that the farmers of the county, who had generally espoused his cause in the affair of the murder, were willing and anxious to intrust their litigations to him. He was making money slowly, and would, in time, become independent if left to his own good sense and economy. But he soon found that his new wife was not disposed to second him in his endeavors to live economically and to accumulate. She knew that only a few years must elapse before her husband could re-enter the manor. What mattered the extent of her outlay, or the debts she might incur? Was not Arthur Delancy justified in living upon his debts, when the revenues of the great manor were so soon to be within his grasp again? Hartwell was gone. He would never reappear. At the expiration of seven years from his disappearance the law declared that the tenancy for life would expire, and Arthur Delancy might claim the reversion to the great estate. In vain did her husband, grown cautious and economical by misfortune, reason with her upon the propriety of saving his fees, and being prepared for any emergency. Hartwell might reappear. His body had never been found. How then would Delancy and his wife appear, hopelessly and dishonorably sunk in debt to their neighbors? Delancy was the very soul of honor in business transactions. His integrity and that of his ancestors were proverbial. He had quarrelled with his mother and daughter on account of his

wife. But he would not incur debts that he was not sure of being able to pay.

Mrs. Arthur Delancy, however, was extravagant, self-willed, and vain. She did not intend to aid any man by her economy. She had married Delancy on account of his anticipated re-entry into the manor. Why should she not flourish her silks and velvets, her furs and laces, her diamonds and her horses now? She was in the prime of her womanhood now. A few years hence she might fade, and then the manor would only know her as a faded beauty. So she ran in debt in the most extraordinary manner, slowly becoming involved at first, then rapidly rolling up bills for her struggling husband to fret over, until finally he became almost frantic over his liabilities. She contrived to soothe him in these moments of frenzy; for when a Delancy was angry it was a terrible anger. Then the ill-feeling would subside, and the matter would rest until some new and ill-advised expenditure would come to her husband's knowledge. At last the lawyer became seriously alarmed at the burden of debts which were being weekly pressed upon his attention by creditors. The Delancy name for integrity went a great way in that county, but by and by tradespeople became alarmed at the high rate of living his wife had inaugurated. They began to clamor for their pay. The hard-worked attorney found that he could not sleep at night. The distress of an honest man hunted by creditors was upon him, unnerving and torturing him. He was too proud to warn the merchants not to trust the wife of a Delancy.

Suddenly, in the midst of his embarrassments, a startling proposition came to him. It came by mail from the metropolis, and under the excited feelings it aroused he was now pacing back and forth in his law-office, undecided what to do. On one side was his pride of ancestry and of home. On the other side was his pride of character, his pride in his individual honor. Could he relinquish forever the grand old Delancy Manor, the home of his childhood, the streams dear to him as the holy waters of the Zem Zem to pilgrims, the superb old woods, the

miles of luxuriant meadows, the dear, old stone mansion of his fathers, with its hallowed reminiscences, and the sacred ground where succeeding generations of the proud old Delancy race were buried? On the other hand, could he relinquish forever the *honor* which had made his family for hundreds of years truly great? What were the broad acres of land in comparison with the honor, the integrity, the self-consciousness of right, of a true man, true to his obligations, true to his word? Here was a way of escape from all his embarrassments. He could be honest now and pay off every one of his debts. Would he do it? Would he be true to the noble name that had descended to him? Aye! Arthur Delancy was worthy of the name he bore. The mental struggle was bitter. The man had once erred through the powerful magnetism of the fool-woman. But when it came to a matter of principle, clear, unmistakable *right* before him, he knew it. He chose the path of principle, and with a throe of agony, which only the true man of an old family and the heir of a great landed ancestral estate can fully appreciate, he consented to the sale of his birthright. He answered the proposition which had come from the metropolis thus:

"Counsellor Hafer, I accept your proposal. I will sell my prospective right to the Delancy Manor for the sum of *two millions of dollars*. God knows, nothing would prompt me to this step but the desire to be an honest man by paying my debts. If the transfer of my right to re-enter the manor can be kept secret for a few years, it will prevent some domestic troubles which I wish to avoid. You will therefore confer a great favor upon me if you will keep this transfer a secret as long as possible."

In a brief period of time this communication was answered by Counsellor Hafer, and the papers transferring Delancy's title were sent, which he signed and returned to the metropolis. By these documents, Counsellor Hafer became possessed of all the future rights in the manor which Arthur Delancy would have had upon the expiration of Hartwell's tenancy for life. The lawyer in whom Delancy's reversion now vested passed

over checks to Delancy on banks of the metropolis to the amount of two millions of dollars, and, furthermore, Counsellor Hafer gave his assurance that the transfer should be kept secret as long as possible. Thus the country lawyer became possessed of that large fortune in ready money in bank, paid off all his indebtedness, and kept the whole affair concealed from his wife. She still lived under the delusion that she would one day become the mistress of the manor, and knew nothing of her husband's new resources. He continued his practice of the law as before. But when the whole transfer had been perfected, Counsellor Hafer quietly transferred his interest to Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, for whom he had been secretly acting. Her diamond, given her by the White Mask, had enabled her to vest in her aged self the right to re-enter the manor upon the expiration of Hartwell's tenancy for life, which the law had defined should be exactly seven years from the day of his disappearance.

When her lawyer placed in her hands the papers which would make her the mistress of the great estate if God should add but a few years to her life, her black eyes were full of exultant light. No heir born in the future to Arthur Delancy and the fool-wife, who was so detested by her, could ever prevent her darling Marie, her grandchild, from being the eventual owner of the manor. If her son's wife should die, the old lady intended to transfer the manor to her son, Arthur Delancy. If the fool-woman did not die, then she would transfer the manor to her grandchild, Marie. Triumph over the woman who had displaced them in the affections of Delancy was sure to come to her, sooner or later. She determined to keep her own counsel, and not even disclose her hidden sword to her granddaughter. Before returning, however, to her little home in the country, Mrs. Delancy wrote a letter to her grandchild, and obtained a secret interview with her in the metropolis. At this meeting Miss Delancy placed in her hands the bag of gold which the sailor had sent to her, and communicated the story of his reasons for making the restitution, and also the singular

fact of his purchasing back her own watch and presenting it to her.

"And can you ascertain nothing about this man?" inquired the grandmother, with well-feigned amazement.

"Nothing," she said. "I have never seen him but once, and there seems to be no clue to find him since his interview with Mr. MacGregor."

"It is very strange, Marie," said the old lady, after a moment's apparent reflection. "I will look over some of your grandfather's papers upon my return to the country and see if there is not some man who was owing your grandfather money, and takes this late opportunity to return it to his family. But strange to say, I can derive no benefit from this bag of gold."

"And why not?" said Miss Delancy, in surprise.

"Because I owe it all to a man who loaned it to me. It was a private transaction of mine, which I do not care to give the details of at present."

"Oh! grandmother," she exclaimed, "I remember it. I saw the bag of gold you borrowed when I was packing your trunk for you when we were leaving the manor. It was very heavy, I remember, when I put it in your trunk. You said Uncle Robert sent it to you in response to a letter you wrote him. You told me then that he loaned it to you for a special purpose."

"Yes, that is the very transaction I allude to," said Mrs. Delancy, "and I am going to repay that amount to your Uncle Robert. How strange that an unknown sailor should send me this money, and that it should be just enough to pay my debt to your Uncle Robert."

"Strange, indeed!" said the young lady. "But suppose, grandmother, I should put an advertisement in one of the city papers, asking for the address of the sailor who sent Mrs. Jourdan Delancy a bag of gold. We might find him in this way."

"No, no, Marie," exclaimed the old lady, with almost startling earnestness. "Do nothing of the kind. I wish no kind of notoriety in the public papers. Let this stranger take his

own time to reveal himself. Doubtless he has his own reasons for maintaining his *incog*."

Miss Delancy thought it very singular that her grandmother should manifest so little curiosity regarding a present of a bag of gold and a gold watch, but she held her peace.

CHAPTER XXII.

*"Commanding beauty, smoothed by cheerful grace,
Sat on each open feature of his face.
Bold was his language, rapid, glowing, strong,
And Science flowed spontaneous from his tongue."
Eulogy of Lord Carteret.*

TO the amazement of all in the house, MacGregor was seen almost daily in the parlor, after Miss Delancy commenced her music lessons under the guidance of the able gentleman whom Matzek had sent to prepare her for the stage. He dropped in at first for a few moments only, as he passed through the hall, and heard her wonderful voice ringing through the house, buoyed up by the playing of Albates. But after a time his visits were prolonged, and he would sit in the recess of the window, hat in hand, ready for his downtown trip, and appear to forget his editorial duties for the day, so absorbed was he in the harmony which seemed to be a necessary aliment of his being. He had revelled in the sounds of music in by-gone days, before anguish had laid its cruel hand upon him, and now its soothing or inspiring influence seemed to fascinate him with its pristine power. Then he would recover with a start from the trance into which these exquisite selections from the operas seemed to plunge him, and stealing quietly out of the parlor, he would hasten down town to fulfil his duties for the day. The two performers at the piano were not disturbed by his quiet entrances or exits, so noiselessly

would he steal in or out, as if the realm of music was a sacred land to him, and discordant noises were a profanation. Sometimes, in the pauses of song, they would appeal to his judgment as to the effect Miss Delancy's execution of some of the more difficult passages would be likely to produce in public. And they always found that his responses were intelligently critical, and that nothing in the rendering of the music escaped his trained ear. After a time it happened that he came in just as Albates was about to leave, and on such occasions he was almost sure to remain a short time with Miss Delancy alone. It was impossible that two cultured and intellectual beings could converse often upon musical topics without the conversation wandering at times into other channels. And thus, eventually, they discovered in each other the existence of deep wells of intellectual appreciation upon many subjects of mutual interest. But Miss Delancy, though fascinated by the conversation of the man who seemed to have read everything, and who manifested in their private interviews the same muscular tone, the same exuberance of feeling, and the same intellectual resources that made his editorials so famous throughout the metropolis, still discovered that there was a hidden influence militating against the perfect development of her companion, and which seemed to throw around all intercourse with him an undefinable barrier of restraint. There was a shadow upon his life, an instinct of distrust, which appeared to check the manifestations of his natural enthusiasm in the moments of his greatest exhilaration. Over the eyes so magnetic and so lustrous, sudden changes would pass, and memories would seem to fill them with painful expression. He never referred to his own sad history, and the hopeful girl who sat beside him never dreamed that this cultured lover of the grand and beautiful had been so tortured that he had stood upon the very margin of madness and murder ; that in front of his innate love of God and innocence had once yawned a gulf of blackness, and soul distortion, dividing him from all hope of heaven forever. He had been created symmetrical and beautiful in mind and body.

Sudden, startling, demoniac cruelty and injustice had for the moment flung him into such desperation, that his whole being had become transformed. He, who had been created the very representative of gentleness, patience, refinement, and hope, had by the bolt of cruelty, which shattered his long-cherished dreams, become maddened into demon fierceness. The girl did not know this. Her acquaintance with him, her introduction to intimacy with him, occurred at the very time the influence of the great agony was passing away. The true man, the original man, was just beginning to reassert himself in him. But his heart, his affections, had been crushed, and to a man of his temperament, these were the whole world. But he was rising slowly, still partially paralyzed from his fall. The greatest and the noblest have ever fallen; they differ from the ignoble, in that the ignoble never rise again. MacGregor was rising once more to the plane of the pure, the beautiful. His lips were pale and cold from the despair and the anguish. But although he murmured the name of God coldly, still he did murmur the holy name, and day after day the holy name became warmer upon his lips. His unmerited suffering had caused him to sneer at the holy name. Now he began to ponder the mysterious action of God. Could it be wrong in his Creator to strip him of that which was not real? The woman he had idolized had proved, beyond all cavil, that she was not a true woman. Could he and would he desire a home with the false, the shallow, the treacherous? Perhaps the act of the Divine Ruler was a merciful act after all. He had only opened blind eyes, and exhibited to MacGregor the false upon which he had leaned too heavily.

But the shadow of the old agony and the old distrust was upon him still. It lingered there, and would not disappear suddenly as the clouds of the sky disappear. Distrust of one woman had engendered distrust of all. Time, joy, peace, experience alone could reinstate confidence in that betrayed heart. And so the lovely girl, who felt that she owed so much of her success to this brilliant, mysterious man, was conscious

that an undefined barrier was between them. She would value the friendship of such a superior man. But he was too cold, too unhappy at times to meet the requirements of friendship, which is all warmth, all trust. There was a yearning in her heart for a friend, lonely and isolated as she was. How naturally she looked to one who had manifested such marked kindness towards her as a proper object upon which to bestow friendship. But she saw instinctively that there were moments of sudden reserve in her companion, and so she wondered, surmised, and pursued her way with a sense of something cold, shadowy, and oppressive upon her intercourse with him. She was too keen-eyed not to detect the substratum of enthusiasm and trust which was underlying his usually guarded conduct. The real warmth and congeniality of the heart would flicker up in their intercourse for a moment, and then be quenched again, as if by an act of his will. It was painful to her at times to hear from those lips sneers at the truthfulness of women. When MacGregor was betrayed into such detractions of her sex, Miss Delancy always withstood him, and maintained the general integrity of women. He seemed to contemplate her at such times with an air of sad superiority, as if his own experiences were more potent than her theories. He was, however, a natural opponent of verbal contentions, and would dismiss the subject with some such remark as this: "I sincerely hope you are right about women. I shall try to look at them as you do."

But the most powerful advocate in the interest of the fair sex was Dream-child. Her influence in softening the heart of the editor increased with her daily development and growth. She seemed to be an ever-present embodiment of female innocence and truth to refute his theories. "Do you mean me, too, MacGregor?" she asked one day, when sitting in his lap, and listening to a long conversation about the hiring character of women. He supposed the child was thinking of the charms of her doll, which she had been caressing.

"No, little one," he replied, at the startling earnestness of her tone. "I don't mean you."

"But you must mean Dream-child," she persisted. "For I am a little woman; and do you think any one could buy *my* heart away from you?"

The child looked up into his face with her great inquiring eyes. She was ludicrously solemn about the matter, and her companions exchanged looks of amusement. Seeing that he remained silent, she said, reproachfully: "You doubt even your little daughter, and that is a great shame when I trust you so."

"And could nothing shake your confidence in me, Dream-child?" he asked.

"No, MacGregor," she said slowly, as if meditating the subject.

"And if the sailor were to come and see you, as he promised, and offer to you everything that you are anxious to have every day, would you not be willing to go away and live with him?"

"No," she said, emphatically.

"Why not?" he inquired. She meditated a moment, and then answered:

"Because he is not like you inside."

"What do you mean by that, Dream-child?"

"He don't believe there is any God, and that makes him bad."

"How do you know that? Did he tell you so?"

"No. He didn't tell me. But I leaned my head up against his breast, and I heard what his heart was saying. It said:

"Hartwell is murdered. If I keep my mouth shut no one will ever know who did it. There is no God to tell them."

Miss Delancy and her companion looked at each other in profound amazement. Here was a clue to the murderer of Hartwell, if only it could be followed up.

"Do you feel sure you heard his heart say this?" inquired Miss Delancy.

"Yes! Tooty. I know I heard it," said the child, with perfect confidence in her memory. The whole household had learned to believe in the clairvoyant powers of the strange child. Sometimes she would suddenly blurt out a secret

thought which some inmate of the house imagined he or she was carrying about secure. The manifestation of her powers in this respect had sometimes afforded infinite amusement to the boarders in the house. At other times it had caused absolute consternation. The little elf, if only she could sit composedly in any one's lap for a few minutes, seemed to be able to give a perfect diagram of what was transpiring in his or her mind. Miss Delancy had been heard also to say that when she slept with Dream-child, she was obliged in every instance to dream the same dreams as the little girl. Here was a marvellous gift of mental insight which had often caused speculation and controversy in the household. The child could read the thoughts of others infallibly, when the conditions of physical contact were perfectly fulfilled. And with the confirmation of this wonderful power, day by day arose the inquiry, "Whence came this child?" Miss Delancy had intimated to MacGregor on several occasions her impression that Dream-child was of supernatural origin. There were times when the wonderful knowledge of character evinced by the child, and her detail of the motives which influenced people with whom she was brought in contact, appeared to have been gained in some prolonged experience in another sphere. It was incredible that one so young could have been educated by former teachers into such a prodigy of insight. Although her present instructress witnessed and testified to the gradual development of Dream-child's mind through her daily lessons, still she maintained that there were times when this exquisite little beauty broke through all the verbiage of childhood, and expressed herself in language and ideas due alone to an adult's experience. These manifestations of immense prior culture were, indeed, fitful. In general, Dream-child employed the language peculiar to all little folks of her years. But Miss Delancy had assured MacGregor that there were certainly evidences about this child, verging upon the miraculous, of a mature existence in another world. When music was introduced in her presence the little creature seemed to become inspired. Her eyes would blaze

with a wonderful brilliancy, and her voice would follow the most difficult passages of the operas upon which Miss Delancy was receiving so thorough a drill. She learned to play the piano, also, with marvellous rapidity, and with a touch of exquisite expression. A canary which hung in his cage in the hall found a perfect imitator in the child's voice. It was impossible to distinguish the bird from the child, when she took it into her little head to mock him. The editor was prompt always in ascribing the child's flashes of intellect to extraordinary precociousness; but in his own judgment, which he dared not deliver in a household where every remark of his was watched for and made much of, there was reason to believe that Dream-child had not come of mortal parents. He was not yet free of the impressions excited by his first vision of her in the fire-lighted chamber. She had apparently not walked in. She had *appeared* suddenly in a locality where he believed himself free of intruders. He had looked up in his anguish, and there she stood, a radiant, lovely comforter of his bleeding heart. From the instant the golden-haired fairy had appeared, his mental and moral recovery dated. She was winning him slowly back to himself—to the original trusting, generous-hearted scholar. Murder only whispered now at rare intervals, and at a great distance. Rarely now would a book, a familiar picture, or a home-scene of somebody's wife and children, bring back that terrible instinct of revenge upon her who had blighted his life. Dream-child had stood at his side, and by her winning beauty and innocent life, won him back, in a measure, to real life. If she were not herself supernatural, her influence had assuredly been angelic. And thus his life was now budding for new fruit. He was half won back to his God.

But now the insight of the little clairvoyant seemed about to be made available for good. The mystery of Hartwell's disappearance had been discussed by the editor and Miss Delancy. The whole story of the tragedy was now familiar to him. He had pondered deeply the communications personally made to him by the sailor who had instantly recognized Miss Delancy

in the jeweller's shop, and had asserted the innocence of herself and her father, and stated that only one inmate of the manor-house could possibly have known who the real murderer was. Why would this sailor not explain from whom his knowledge was derived? Was he an accomplice, or was he the real murderer himself? If he had participated in the crime, would he be likely to mention the subject at all to MacGregor? He had, moreover, promised to put in the hands of the police something that he declared they were anxious to possess in connection with Hartwell's disappearance. But now the revelation of Dream-child came with startling clearness. The little child, whose words always were true, had read these thoughts in the breast of the sailor who knew so much: "*Hartwell is murdered. If I keep my mouth shut, no one will ever know who did it.*" In vain did MacGregor and Miss Delancy endeavor to elicit from the child further knowledge of what had appeared to her to transpire in the sailor's mind. The simple sentences just recorded were all that her clairvoyant powers had read there, save only the following sentences, which she repeated to them, and said that she had also repeated to the sailor in the jewelry shop, viz.: "There is the Jewess. I wonder if she recognizes me? I must watch her." These last words they made her repeat over, and MacGregor wrote them down on paper with his lead pencil. It was evident now that a Jewess had been present in the shop, who had sometime been acquainted with the sailor. They determined to visit the detective office and see if with these words of Dream-child as clues some detective might not be able to track the sailor, and ascertain who he was. They accordingly, on the following day, visited the police department, and put these facts before the officers. To their amazement, they learned that Miss Ettinger, the Jewess, had already put the police upon the trail of Trowbridge, the sailor, who had sold diamonds to Mr. Blue, but that thus far the detective could ascertain nothing of the man's whereabouts after he had left the jewelry shop. They were intrusted also with the astounding intelligence that this sailor,

whose voice had been recognized by the Jewess as that of the man who had once carried off three Arabic studs from her house, had recently returned them by mail to the police department, with the cool assurance that they belonged to the daughter of the late banker, Nathan Ettinger, and that possibly they might be of service to the department in tracking out the fate of the missing banker, or in ascertaining who had made away with him. The mysterious man, who was suspected of being either a principal or an accessory in the murder of Nathan Ettinger, had voluntarily delivered up the Arabic studs, and gone on his unknown way. He could not be found.

But when, during this interview at the police headquarters, Miss Delancy, in the innocence and thoughtlessness of her heart, mentioned the singular fact of this unknown sailor having sent her grandmother a bag of gold, on account of her having once done him a great pecuniary service, she noticed that one of the employés of the office, who had stood a little apart, drew near, and appeared to be deeply interested in her recital.

"May I ask you to state that fact once more, Miss Delancy?" he said, very courteously. "It may be of service to us."

"Certainly, sir," she said. Then she hesitated, remembering what her grandmother had said about avoiding notoriety. "I have no objection to repeat what I said, sir," she remarked finally, "if it does not go to the newspapers."

"Oh! certainly not," was the response. "We should never accomplish anything in our office if we communicated with newspaper people."

The young lady then narrated the whole affair, commencing with the interview of the sailor with MacGregor, the delivery of the bag of gold for her grandmother, and the remarks made upon the receipt of the gold by her grandmother. She felt that she was giving this information in the interest of public justice; that the discovery of the real murderer would wipe off all the reproach and suspicion which had attached to her family. She little knew the effect of her disclosures upon the quiet, gentle-

manly individual who had solicited the repetition of her statements regarding the bag of gold and her grandmother. At the conclusion of her remarks, he thanked her, and withdrew from the apartment, leaving her and MacGregor to make their exit from the building, escorted by one of the police officers.

When this gentlemanly employé of the office, who had been so attentive a listener to her remarks, was alone, he put his forefinger between his eyebrows, as was his custom when making mental combinations, and pondered long. He was the famous detective originally employed by the Rev. Henry Morgan to ferret out the mystery of the man buried near the manor gate, by the aid of the single Arabic stud. He was the same detective who had said to himself: "How did this stranger [the White Mask] know that a detective was upon the trail of a murderer of the unknown?" He was the same detective who said, on the occasion of Miss Ettinger's being intrigued out of the Arabic stud: "The only person not pledged to conceal the clergyman's facts, suspicions, and employment of a detective, *is that old lady*. No outsider could know that Miss Ettinger had any interest in a detective calling upon her, unless Mrs. Jourdan Delancy has let out the secret that a detective is at work, and that the murdered unknown at the manor gate is supposed to be the lost Hebrew banker." He had suspected before that Mrs. Delancy was acquainted with the man who had carried out of Miss Ettinger's house the three Arabic studs. Now, from the revelations made to him by Miss Delancy, he had the positive assurance that the sailor did *know* Mrs. Delancy, and Miss Ettinger had established the fact that that sailor and the man who had carried off the three studs from her house, had the same voice, were identical. Now, who was this sailor that *knew* Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, and why did he send her a bag of gold in *restitution* for value received from her? Why was the amount exactly the same as that she had borrowed and had in her trunk on the day Hartwell was murdered? He had suspected Mrs. Jourdan Delancy of complicity in the murder of Hartwell. This suspicion was

shared by many people in the county where the affair occurred. The black mask had entered her bedroom, and the door was locked behind him, and that was the last that was ever seen of him. The detective now asked himself: "Is this sailor the real murderer, and was he employed to do the deed by Mrs. Delancy? If so, and if she paid him in gold for the act, why should he return the exact amount to her. Do assassins ever return to their employers the wages for blood? A long interval of time was between the murder and the restitution." This restitution puzzled the officer of the law, suspecting, as he did, that Mrs. Delancy had hired the sailor to do the deed. To be sure, Mr. Blue had admitted that he had paid the sailor more than *one hundred thousand dollars* for diamonds which he had brought from the Brazils. So that the sailor did not absolutely need the bag of gold, and might have returned that amount of money easily to the old lady. But was it probable that, rich or poor, any murderer would return his blood wages to his employer? Persons who murder for gold are generally tenacious of their gold. But was there not something anomalous about this sailor? A suspected person himself, he had boldly returned into the hands of the police the Arabic studs, one of which, by deceit, he had obtained by representing himself as connected with the detective office. This looked like the rashness and fearlessness of a bold operator. Fear was manifestly a stranger to him. It was audacious to fling into the face of the police the studs by which they had been endeavoring to establish the fact that Hartwell had murdered the banker near the gate of the manor. The two studs having been seen on Hartwell's shirt-bosom had appeared to be evidence that Hartwell had murdered the banker. Was the fact that those two studs had subsequently passed into the hands of the sailor equally strong evidence that the sailor had murdered Hartwell? This last conclusion looked plausible to the detective, and he resolved to act in accordance with it, until something new turned up. He determined, also, to put a spy upon all of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy's movements in the country, hoping that in

some way the old lady and the sailor would have interviews, and thus the detective department could track him and ascertain who he was. He accordingly notified the office that they must send a spy to the country to "pipe" Mrs. Delancy, which means, in the vernacular of the department, to keep an eye upon her, and never allow her to be on the streets without knowing where she goes in and out; in fact, to keep a daily record of her haunts and acquaintances. Having secured this assistance in his plans, he then sat down to meditate upon the novel auxiliary which had come to him in the business of ferreting out murderers, viz., *clairvoyance*. He was so eminently practical, that the supernatural or the psychological aid, whichever it might be, seemed almost ludicrous to him. Nevertheless, he could not ignore the fact that this Dream-child had said something very startling about a subject and a man whom she could not possibly have known anything about. She had pronounced the man, who had given her presents calculated to warm her little heart towards him, to be a bad man, because he did not believe in God, and also a man who was carrying around in his breast the knowledge of the identity of the murderer of Hartwell. The character of MacGregor, who had confirmed Miss Delancy's version of Dream-child's statement, was too well known to admit of any supposition of mistake in the matter. Hence, after a long meditation, he convinced himself that it would not be utterly absurd to remember Dream-child and her reputed powers in the future, when circumstances might bring the child in physical contact with some one who might be suspected of carrying an ugly secret in the bosom. He would resort to the usual system of tactics of the department to track the criminal or criminals who had brought the Delancy family into such unenviable notoriety. But if all vigilance and cunning failed to identify the guilty, there could be no harm in testing the little one's gift of insight, if the opportunity of physical contact should ever occur.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Life has nothing of the enchantment I once dreamed. It offers a thousand inevitable pains and a thousand enemies wait upon it. I must therefore march firmly and severely on the sad route, and, to guard against slander, must renounce happiness."—Letitia Bonaparte.

MACGREGOR did not realize how necessary Miss Delancy's society had become to him, until he was deprived of it by her illness. The habit of dropping in upon her musical exercises had been formed before he was aware of it. At first he had paused at the parlor door to listen only for a moment; then this visit had been prolonged from day to day, until it became of an hour's duration. Finally, he found that the day seemed to be imperfect if he had not dropped in upon Albetes and his pupil at the piano. He was surprised at the change in himself. He had fancied that he never could regain his interest in society. He had learned to distrust people. And it was a luxury to be alone with Dream-child, to be alone with innocence and inexperience, for here he could not be deluded or betrayed. It was a rapture for his heart to press the child's head against his breast, and listen to her prattle, to answer her inquiries, and to read to her. She suited him, for she seemed to comprehend his moods. She laughed and asked questions, when he was communicative. She sat silent and thoughtful beside him when he was averse to conversation or noise. He found her to be always in harmony with his thoughts, as if by some miraculous insight she studied his inner life. He had wondered at the child's attachment to him when he was so often abstracted. His experience had taught him that children generally like and cling to those who watch their every want, and hasten to minister to it. But Dream-child seemed never to make any demands of him except the demands to answer her questions, suggested by the books he read to her, or the conversations he commenced with her. She never manifested the slightest disposition for the society of children

of her own apparent age. She would look out from his window upon children in the street at play, and sometimes call his attention to some peculiarity of their dress or action. But when he suggested that she might go and play with them, she always declined, and expressed her preference for his society. There was one source of delight to her, however, which he was not long in ascertaining. It was her fondness for firelight and sunlight. She would plant her little chair before his coal fire and gaze long and thoughtfully into the glowing mass, until he found, at last, that her imagination was conjuring up all sorts of fantastic palaces and faces in the red coals. Here, first, he detected the poetic in her. If uninterrupted she would sit motionless, and absorbed, and silent. If he broke in upon her reverie she would commence a low, musical-toned description of the wonders she saw in the fire. Her imagination generally took the direction of fire-spirits, plying their vocations in the midst of red fire-palaces and grottoes. But her greatest luxury was to bask in the sunlight. By accident she gained access to his rooms one morning, while a flood of sunbeams was pouring in at the windows. She went directly into their midst as if she recognized them as old friends. To his amazement the child seemed to become instantly a part of the golden flood. For a moment he thought her wavy hair had dissolved into sunbeams, and that she would vanish. The whole mass of child, hair, and sunbeams seemed for a moment to alternate with each other, to dissolve and reform into each other. She seemed to be the central sun, from which the rays were emanating. He feared that the whole picture would vanish, so ethereal, misty, impalpable, was the effect. He seemed to realize what theologians call a *spiritual body*. Presently, as he gazed closer, she emerged from the sunbeams and approached him with a smile. He was sure that she must be of the same essence as the sunlight. He was delighted that she had stepped out of the circle of sunbeams for he feared she was about to dissolve into them and leave him forever. "I thought you were turning into sunlight," he said, as he put his arms about her and tasted the

pink moisture of her lips. "No," she replied, "I was only taking a bath."

From this hour forward he always watched her anxiously when the sunlight fell upon her, for he feared she might vanish as suddenly as she had come to him. But time confirmed him in the opinion that God had really given the child to him as a life comforter, and his apprehension of losing her gradually weakened. Thus, month by month, she developed in mind and body under his tender care, and it was palpable enough that the exquisite child was growing taller. It would be erroneous to state that her eyes were assuming a higher degree of intelligence. That was impossible. From the instant her radiant presence was revealed to him, her eyes had all the power that men are wont to associate with the eyes of a matured genius. Brown, luminous, and gentle, they had from the first the fascination of maturity. They had, moreover, a wonderful magnetism slumbering in their depths. Whenever she chose to exercise her power men could not look away from her. She would gaze steadily into the face of any one she selected for her object, and as soon as the pupils of her eyes began to dilate, the man or woman could not, to save even their life, look away from her. Her look became an edict of command.

MacGregor became very strongly attached to her, for though juvenile she appeared to contain within her little being the essence of all he valued. Poetry, music, tenderness, truth, grace, beauty, intellectual appreciation, and the capability of isolating, for a time, the soul from the material casket which imprisoned it, all belonged to her, and sometimes each manifested itself with such fulness and force that he was driven to the miraculous to account for it in one so young. And now the little elf seemed to be so thoroughly and triumphantly enthroned in his heart, that he had come to believe she was sufficient for all the wants of his nature. But MacGregor soon learned his mistake.

One day Miss Delancy was taken violently ill. A physician was summoned, and when Albates came to give her the daily

music lesson, he was notified that it would be many days before his pupil would sing at a piano again. A fever had laid violent hands upon her, and the voice of her melody was hushed. Dream-child stole in and out of the sick-room with the fairy-like ease and quiet which always attended her step, and gave MacGregor all the intelligence regarding the patient which the nurse daily whispered in her little ear. When he returned nightly from the office, she was waiting for him at the head of the stairs, ready to communicate to him the latest news from the sick-room. The fever had a long and dangerous reign, and a sense of gloom overshadowed the editor. It had once seemed to him that, having passed through domestic agony which had shaken the citadel of his reason almost to its fall, he could never again suffer that oppression upon his heart; that sense of desolation which makes all nature look black and crumbling. But when he missed the thrilling strains of vocal melody which used to greet his ear as he passed through the hall to the street; when he looked into the parlor and saw the piano close shut, and the long green cover hanging low upon its sides; when he realized that the graceful, beautiful patrician was no longer standing beside it, and smiling recognition towards him in the interval of song, he realized that he had become deeply interested in the struggling girl whom he had befriended. Could it be possible that his crushed, benumbed heart could ever bleed again? Had not every capability of suffering loneliness and of suffering despair been forever smothered in him? Would God, after blighting his heart once, be so cruel as to teach him new pangs and open a new hell to him when he was struggling so hard to get back to God? "Oh my God!" he exclaimed, "I do not desire to love any one again but Dream-child. Dry up this new fountain of feeling in my heart. I am not strong enough to pass through another vale of tears. I have been almost crazed already. Pity me and give me a life of peace, of labor, of usefulness, until the sods cover me."

He covered his face with his hands, and bowing low upon his

desk, prayed God that he might never love again. Strange prayer! To him once love had been the very acme of human happiness. It had seemed so noble, so sweet to give all of one's inner life to another, to withhold nothing of pride or secrecy in order to win an entire heart in return. He had given all. He had trusted with the *abandon* of a noble soul. He had been deceived. She had whispered lies into his ear. She had robed herself in the angelic garb, and spoken to him in the divine vernacular of *love*. He had placed his honor, his ambition, his affection, like a child, in her hands. Like a demon she had employed the device of love only to extort from him dresses, food, carriages, horses, position. She had over-estimated his pecuniary value. When she discovered her mistake, she had taken the child which God had given them both and deserted him. She had not loved the man, but only her estimate of the pecuniary worth he might be to her. And so he prayed God that he might never love again. Alas! hearts like MacGregor's have no choice. The beings of hireling character can select their loves as the shopkeeper selects his goods. If the noble-hearted love, it is from the noblest, purest, most unselfish instinct. They conceive an ideal, and then endeavor to win it to themselves. They clothe it with the nobility and sweetness of their own hearts. Their very integrity and loveliness of character induce them to believe that their object of love also possesses these qualities. They cannot realize that over the entrances of nine out of ten of human hearts is written "*hireling*." Few truly love for the sake of love alone.

And now, with the arrow of a new love just commencing its delicate prick into his heart, he prayed for relief from God. He shuddered at the possibility of another hell. The absence of Miss Delancy from her accustomed haunts had taught him instantly that there was danger for him in her presence. He was uneasy and unhappy now that he could not see her as usual. This uneasiness was to him the signal of danger. He had fancied that he was charmed only by the melody of her voice. He knew now that the melody of her character had

wrought the spell. She was straining every nerve and hazarding every sense of humiliation to aid those she loved. He knew what it was for a lady born and bred to face the public on a stage. He knew that this refined, sensitive, poetic nature was going there with the instincts of a martyr going to the stake. With the serene proud will of her race she would sacrifice everything but honor to fulfil what she believed to be duty. He felt that if such a woman loved, rags upon the loved one would be as beautiful to her as ruffles. Here was a woman who would never desert a struggling man. Slowly upon him had dawned her strong traits of character. Had he been less pre-occupied by his own arduous literary labors, and by the ever-recurring memories of his wife and child, he would have recognized her merits in their first weeks of intercourse. But mental pain and literary concentration of thought deaden one's perceptions of what is passing near us. The music of her voice had fallen upon his soul. Melody soothes the throes of mortal anguish. When theologians promise to the disembodied soul the joys of heaven they wisely suggest music as a part of that eternal fruition. It is the crushed, agonized heart that can appreciate a place of rest and harmony. Upon the ear of MacGregor a wonderful voice had sounded. He paused in his heart agony to listen. Never since the day Timotheus performed harmonic wonders at the nuptials of Alexander had such sweet sounds delighted the listening ear. The editor drew near not to a woman, but to a voice. It was a long time before he saw the woman. The voice was the enchantress, for he had foresworn all women. Having heard and appreciated the voice, he desired that the world should hear it. Hence his powerful editorial introduction of the singer to the public.

But intercourse with the singer had exhibited her real character to him. She was more than a musician. She was a noble, self-sacrificing woman, such a woman as he had believed all women to be, in his enthusiastic, early life. He felt the more satisfaction then that he had encouraged the singer, that he had not been merely advancing the interests of a "hireling."

Fortified by the knowledge of his own matrimonial chains, which would for a lifetime prevent any hope of his being loved, he had persisted in his intimacy with Miss Delancy, without a thought of personal danger. The idea of love had never crossed his mind. Suddenly the pleasant intercourse was broken up by her illness, and he discovered that his life was growing dark again. She had been a light to him, and the light was gone from him. Dream-child, too, was a light, but she did not now compensate for the light which was gone. He folded the child to his bosom, and her wealth of soft, golden hair fell upon him like sunlight. He was very tender to the little one, but he was thoughtful and silent. Ever sympathetic with his moods, she was silent too. It was the hour of evening. The editor had come home earlier than usual. The early summer ruled the earth, and the setting sun was still shining in at his windows. As the rays of light fell upon her face upturned to his, he thought he detected an unusual expression of interest in her eyes. They were steadily regarding him. Her head had fallen back upon his arm, and she laid there looking up at him.

"Why do you look so attentively at me, Dream-child?" he said.

"Because you are so blind, MacGregor."

"Blind! I am not blind. I see as well as you do."

A smile played upon her lips, and then she shook her head in dissent.

"Tell me why you think I am blind," he said.

"Because you can't see as well as Dream-child can." As she said this she was lying very quietly in his arms, and giving him a strange look of intelligence, as if she knew what he was thinking about.

"Tell me, then, what you see, my dear little fairy."

"Perhaps she will be angry, if I tell you," said the child.

"Who will be angry?"

"Tooty," she said.

"Did she tell you not to tell?" he asked.

"No. She don't know that I know it," replied the child.

"Well, then, you tell me, Dream-child, and I will never tell her that I know it. How will that do?"

"That will do splendid," she said. "But you are awful blind, or you would see it yourself."

"I don't pretend to be very bright, my dear one, so you tell me."

"Will you promise never to tell her I told you?" she asked.

"Certainly. I won't tell."

"Then let me whisper it in your ear," she said, making an effort to sit up. She succeeded in sitting upright in his lap, and he bent his head so that his ear would touch her lips. The communication she gave him sent the blood coursing through his veins like fire. The intelligence was full, clear, and convincing. It had been collected night after night and day after day by the mysterious child, whose insight into secret thoughts was more potent than any verbal assertion could be. The little elf could hardly fail to read thoughts correctly, when she had enjoyed facilities for physical contact of the most intimate and perfect character. She unveiled to MacGregor in that whispered communication the carefully guarded treasure of a woman's love. The lone, deserted man had won the secret love of Miss Delancy without an effort, without even the full consciousness that he desired it.

For a moment after this disclosure he sat like one bewildered by the magnitude and splendor of an unexpected gift. Then he said to Dream-child: "Go and see how Tooty is now, and come and tell me after awhile. And remember that I ask you never to mention to any human being what you have just told me."

"Never," she said, seriously. And then she ran noiselessly away to look after the invalid.

When he was alone, he arose from his chair and paced the room. He was thrilled by the child's communication. He knew now how precious to him was that fair girl, precious above

anything on the earth. He had felt the first symptoms of love in himself, and had endeavored to shake them off. While in the midst of this struggle the startling truth had come to him that he had aroused the terrible passion of love in Miss Delancy herself. He could not tell how, when, or where this calamity had originated. He had been totally unconscious of the growth of this disastrous passion in himself or in her. It was disastrous, and he appreciated the full extent of that fact. What should he do now? What would she do when she discovered that he was fettered by a marriage? He had never spoken to any one in the city of the partial divorce which separated him for life from his wife. He had been too isolated from women for the truth ever to have been divulged. Now the intoxication of loving and being loved was upon him, and yet it was all in vain. But a crisis had been reached, and activity was demanded of him at once. Why? Because he was a man of honor. He had won a bewildering, precious, inestimable love. Love had been a germ in his heart. The disclosure of Miss Delancy's secret had made it instantly a full-grown, flourishing plant. The poor, deserted, crushed heart of the man warmed with sudden fire. He was loved, loved by the great, the noble, the pure. His was the love his poet's heart had idealized during his entire life. The great prize had come at last. Alas! he could only gaze upon the priceless treasure, and then hasten away from it, turn his back upon it, ignore it utterly, and flee. Where? Where could he fly? Anywhere, so that the great, beautiful, upright woman whom he loved, could never reproach him with duplicity, with concealing his true situation, and winning her heart by fraud. He must fly to make her always honor him. He cared more now for that woman's respect than for all the treasures of the world. Yes! he did love her, fettered as he was by the laws of the state. He loved her so well that his own bright honor dictated flight. He had not sought her love. He had done nothing to attract it to himself. Unconsciously the sentiment had budded and burst into life for both of them. Both were yet guiltless. Her love was pure and unconscious of im-

propriety. He could be honorable, but flight was necessary, immediate, precipitate flight. To avoid the occasions of sin was now duty, duty in the sight of God, duty in the sight of honor. Honor burned in him with its pristine effulgence. God was gradually supplanting in his heart the murderous, frenzied passion of revenge for a blighted life. He called upon God now. With the exquisite sweetness of reciprocated love filling his being with rapture, he called upon his Creator to place him beyond the reach of temptation. "I will honor God; I will be true to my own honor," he said. "No breath of scandal shall ever breathe upon the spotless white of that noble girl's soul. When she wakes up at last to the consciousness that she has not loved a thing of clay, but a true man, she will honor me, and her respect is better than the favor of kings. I have done her no intentional wrong. I will do her noble heart no further wrong, now that my eyes are opened. I was almost a murderer when I was half crazed by cruelty. But I come of a stock that never betrays the trusting. Farewell, dear woman. I will labor to advance you all my life, I will never harm you, and so I must never look upon your dear face again."

The excited man paced back and forth through his rooms, arranging his plan of procedure in his mind. After a time he summoned Dream-child to his apartments.

"Listen to me," he said, "and tell me your choice. You may do just as you like. I am going away from this house, and shall live in another place. Will you go with me, or will you stay with Tooty?"

The child looked up in amazement to his calm, beautiful face. All the anguish he had just passed through had left no traces except that he was very pale. His eyes were clear and beautiful as an eagle's, though his heart was almost bursting with agony. The child's eyes filled with tears as she clung to him. "Must I leave Tooty?" she asked.

"You must leave Tooty, or leave me," he answered. "I will love you wherever you may be, and I shall always be your

father wherever you are, and provide for all your wants. Decide now with whom you will live."

She looked up at the tall, noble man, who looked paler than she had ever seen him before, and, with her tiny hand pushing aside her wonderful luxuriance of silky, golden hair, seemed to be studying her response. She was so beautiful and so dear that he could scarcely restrain a demonstration to her of the anxiety which he felt to hear her decision.

"I will go with you," she said, at last, "all over the world."

"And you will give up Tooty for me?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "God will take care of poor Tooty."

Her voice trembled as she pronounced these words. Then she put up both arms to him in fondness. He lifted her from the floor and pressed her to his heart, saying:

"God does not intend to leave me alone again."

She was very quiet, with her head resting against him, and made no response to his last words. Then he said, to test her power, so mysterious was its operation always to him:

"What am I thinking of now? Do you know?"

"Yes; a little, green grave," she said; and then was very still again.

"And what am I thinking of now?" he inquired, after a short pause.

"You think there is one little woman who will never desert you, and that's me."

In two hours from the delivery of these last words a carriage drove up to the door of the house, and presently MacGregor and Dream-child, the latter carrying the gilded cage containing her gray parrot, entered the vehicle and drove away. Neither of them bade farewell to Miss Delancy, as she was sleeping profoundly from a drug administered by her physician. This latter gentleman informed the editor that the patient would doubtless be upon her feet again in a few days. The landlady of the house was handed a note by MacGregor upon leaving, with the injunction to deliver it to Miss Delancy whenever she should be well enough to attend to business.

CHAPTER XXIV.

*"A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."*

*"The gallant st person, and the noblest minde,
In all the world his prince could ever finde,
Or to participate his private cares,
Or bear the public weight of his affairs."*

THE *crème de la crème* of the society of the metropolis gradually awakened to the fact that a notable character had gained access to their select circle. His credentials were of the highest character. Henry R. Grenbel, the millionaire merchant and refined gentleman, had received from his friend in London, the Lord Grey de Ruthyn, a letter, saying: "The bearer is my friend, who proposes to himself a home in the United States. He is anxious to purchase a *Môme* in your State, if he can find one suitable for his purpose. Otherwise he will purchase land and build upon it. Introduce him to your friends as you would introduce me. You will find him worthy of all trust, and a gentleman of the highest attainments. He has amassed a great fortune in banking business, and will pay a large sum for property which answers his purpose. Advise him and aid him, and you will be rendering me a great service. Though very far advanced in life he seriously contemplates matrimony. So here is an opportunity for some one of your lovely countrywomen to secure a warm heart and an elegant home. You will be charmed by Mr. Dashwood, and I entrust him to your hospitality and courtesy."

This letter was delivered in person by Mr. Dashwood, a venerable gentleman with long, white hair falling upon his shoulders, a long, white beard, and a dark complexion. The stranger's elegant manners and rare conversational powers attracted the attention of Henry R. Grenbel at the first interview, and he immediately invited the old gentleman to occupy apartments in his own family mansion until he could look around and purchase a home for himself. This act of hospitality was

graciously accepted by the banker, and he soon won the affections of the merchant's accomplished wife and daughters. Soon after Mr. Dashwood established himself in the city mansion and confidence of Henry R. Grenbel, the latter addressed a business letter to Lord Grey de Ruthyn, and in a postscript added these words: "I am delighted with your friend Dashwood, and have taken him into my own family. He certainly has other qualities to recommend him than those which have amassed for him his great wealth. We are all charmed with his learning and his fascinating ways. My daughter, Mary, says she would surely fall in love with him if he was younger. We shall give a large party in his honor next week, and present him to our best society." In response to this postscript, Lord Grey de Ruthyn wrote to the New York merchant, saying: "You have my warmest thanks for your kindness to my friend Dashwood. I hope to reciprocate your favors some day in England."

The old banker was now introduced to all of the elegant circle of people who accepted Mrs. Henry R. Grenbel as a leader in fashionable society. At the grand reception given in his honor, his venerable appearance, his polished ease of manner, his charming badinage with the ladies, his intellectual discourse, evoked by contact with the cultivated men, his wit, his princely bearing, made him at once the cynosure for all eyes. His first appearance in that elegant circle was a great success. He mounted at once to high favor, and in a few days cards of invitation to receptions and balls poured in upon him. Whispers of his immense wealth soon stole about among the *beau monde*. The latest *on dit* was that it was his ambition to marry the most beautiful woman in the city who would accept him, and build for her in the country the most palatial residence on the continent. Young ladies were moving in Mrs. Grenbel's circle of society who were heard to say that Mr. Dashwood's age and wrinkles were not so very objectionable in a man who combined so many superb intellectual qualities with such exquisite taste in art and music. He was by no means an ordinary performer

upon the piano, and his execution of operatic music found many admirers. But when, after a few weeks' acceptance of the hospitality of Henry R. Grenbel, the banker purchased a house upon *the avenue*, and assumed the rôle of host himself, he became immensely popular. His temporary residence upon the fashionable street was furnished under his own personal supervision, and with a novel taste which he declared to be his own. Such lavish expenditure, and that, too, upon a merely temporary home, had never been known in the annals of New York society. Who would be the fortunate lady of Mr. Dashwood's choice? This question passed rapidly from mouth to mouth. And as wild rumors and apparent exaggerations of the man's pecuniary resources flew about, some fresh expenditure, some new entertainment, far surpassing its predecessor, was indulged in by this English Cræsus. The ladies became extravagant in their praise of the decorations of his apartments, the fortunes in velvets, tapestry, silks, and laces, which he lavished upon his rooms when they were lighted up for balls and dinners. And this was to be only the prelude to the display which the marvellous man intended to inaugurate when his out-of-town house was completed for summer resort. The *habitués* of his saloons, and these were the *élite* of the metropolis, soon announced to the world at large that such jewels as were seen upon his person, and always in exquisite keeping with his perfect dress, had never been seen upon the person of any one but a monarch. The banker was either squandering his entire fortune upon entertainments, decorations, dress, and jewels, or his wealth was an inexhaustible mine, hidden from the knowledge of business men, and apart from the ordinary results of traffic.

The entertainments given by this venerable gentleman, who was so pre-eminently one of the *bien-aimés* of fortune, were remarkably select. Though hundreds of people made his acquaintance, some naturally, others by forcing themselves upon him, his discernment was so fine that none but the *élite* received cards to his dinners and balls. He gave occasionally, however, *petits soupers*, in his spacious dining-hall, to the artists and au-

thors of the city. The walls of the supper-room were covered with pink silk and festooned with real point lace, and the ceiling was entirely covered with mother-of-pearl. These extravagances, and the elegant manner in which they were conducted, became the theme of excited discourse in every drawing-room of the city. The rumor was started, but almost immediately was strangled by the leading newspapers, that Mr. Dashwood, although immensely wealthy, was *non compos mentis*. The editors of the influential sheets, with wonderful accord, pronounced in favor of the marvellous scholarly attainments of the stranger, and his admirably well-balanced intellect. They maintained, with extraordinary warmth, that it was nothing but pure kindness and appreciation that induced him to give such sumptuous entertainments to literary and artistic men. The man had immense wealth; why should he hoard it for strangers to spend when he had no relatives or heirs? It was observed, however, that editors were always invited to the dinners given exclusively to gentlemen, and that they always had access to him in his private library when others were excluded who had higher social claims. But it was noted also in this connection that the class of editors whose journals thrive principally upon personal abuse of individuals were excluded from his acquaintance. He courted the society only of journalists who published papers suitable to be read by ladies and people of refined sense of decorum.

One of the editorial fraternity, whose acquaintance was early sought for by the banker, was MacGregor. Mr. Dashwood manifested at once an earnest desire to cultivate friendship with this journalist. He put himself to the trouble of ascertaining who were MacGregor's favorites among ladies and gentlemen, and then invited him to meet them at dinner. When once the acquaintance was formed the banker paid marked attention to the journalist, and manifested the utmost interest in his views upon all matters of intellectual culture and taste. The editor discovered that he had secured a powerful friend who was both dilettante and logician, a man who could appreci-

ate an able editorial, a remarkable observer of character, and a being of the warmest and most generous impulses. He sounded MacGregor's praises in every drawing-room to which he was invited, and the editor soon discovered that these persistent manifestations of regard were exerting a powerful influence upon his own pecuniary interests. The circulation of his paper rapidly increased, for it soon became the fashion to patronize everything and everybody that found in Mr. Dashwood a eulogist. The banker, whose force of character seemed to become almost omnipotent in social matters, had decided to give MacGregor the *entrée* to every circle that was calculated to advance him in life. The old man had discerned with the rapidity of genius the great motive power of New York city. He saw at once that wealth, unattended even by culture or intellect, accomplished marvels in securing respect and power. "What results can I not accomplish," he said to himself, "when to the money these people worship, I can add my scheming, invincible will and intelligence as an auxiliary power. I have admission through Lord Grey de Ruthyn to their most aristocratic society. I have literary and artistic cultivation equal to the best of them. I have a keen sense of the motives which influence the human heart. What my intellect fails to master, my money judiciously applied will buy. New York, I know you well. You shall lay helpless at my feet, for I hold in my hands all the wires which move you."

Day after day, and with the persistency of an iron will, did this strange old man seek to win to himself human hearts. His tongue was eloquent, his taste inimitable, his kindness unflagging. He won to his cause the press, and they lauded him. He befriended the authors, and they dedicated to him their books. He patronized the artists liberally, and they hung in the Academy and in their studios portraits of their cultivated benefactor. He gave money to the churches and charitable institutions, and they placed his name in the list of their trustees. He gave money to the poor, and they mentioned his name upon every corner. The newspaper which had published

the libel concerning his sanity, he purchased secretly, and purchased the editor, too. But he encountered in the man he loved better than them all an opposition which chafed him night and day. For some strange and hidden motive, he had determined that Miss Delancy should not be successful before the public. The newspapers had announced that this lady would soon appear at the Academy of Music. The old man read the announcement one morning, as he was seated alone in his exquisite little breakfast-room, with a scarlet velvet dressing-gown, lined with white silk, wrapped about his aged limbs. The walls of this apartment were covered with the same velvet in narrow folds, and the delicate frames of the paintings which hung upon them were of polished white, with a narrow inner frame of gold. Lace curtains of almost fabulous value covered the windows, and gracefully drawn aside from them were the heavier curtains of scarlet velvet, lined with white silk, and looped back with white silk cord and tassels. The tapestry carpet was white with scarlet rose-buds only to relieve its monotonous hue. The Italian marble mantel-piece was carved in roses, and the coal fire was screened from the old man by a marble statue of Mercury, with a winged cap, and holding before the flames a fine circular silver net. The old gentleman was seated at a circular breakfast table, covered with a scarlet velvet cloth, and the silver of the breakfast service flashed brightly in the sunlight which poured in at a window. Over the collar of his scarlet morning robe wandered the long, white hair of Mr. Dashwood. His white beard concealed at times the great diamond which glistened upon the snowy ruffle of his shirt bosom. At his feet was stretched a white Italian greyhound, with a collar of solid gold, and watching intently his master, that he might catch the occasional morsels of broiled fowl flung to him by the aged hands.

When Mr. Dashwood's eye caught the item in the morning paper, announcing that Miss Marie Delancy would soon make her *début* at the Academy of Music, he uttered an exclamation of impatience. Then he read the article a second time, laid

down the paper, and fell into a reverie, which ran thus: "That is the daughter of the man who has the reversion of the estate which adjoins my recent purchase. She may some day be the owner of that manor. If she goes upon the stage, it must be because of her poverty. It will be a trying ordeal for the poor girl. Had I better save her from it? She will some day likely be my neighbor. If I save her now from the mortification of going to the footlights she will be a grateful neighbor if she ever gains possession of the Delancy manor. But will she accept pecuniary aid from a stranger? The Delancy family are proud; proud people sometimes prefer the stage to receiving charity. What is her style of character in this respect? Shall I try her? I believe I will."

After a long meditation upon this subject he rang his bell for his servant, who instantly appeared, arrayed in the finest of black broadcloth, and with white cravat and gloves. This handsome young man, with black eyes and rosy cheeks, came in, with a solid gold server under his arm, and advancing to a point near his master, bowed low, and then stood respectfully awaiting orders. Upon his left breast he wore a gold star with the figure "1" prominent in its centre.

"Number One," said Mr. Dashwood, "listen to me while I read you this item."

"Yes, sir," was the response.

The announcement of the young lady's appearance upon the stage was read to him.

"Now," said his master, as he pushed the paper away from him, "I want to get that lady's address. How shall I do it?"

"From the leader of the opera, sir."

"Number One, you are clear-headed and quick," said the banker. "There is a hundred-dollar bill for you. Brains in this house are equivalent to money." He threw a bank bill to the servant, having taken it from a roll of money in the pocket of his dressing-gown. "See that I have this address laid upon my table before to-morrow night," he continued.

"Yes, sir," replied the servant, and then stood silent, awaiting further orders.

His master waved his hand towards the door, and Number One vanished through it.

On the evening of the following day the banker sat in his library beside his writing table. The apartment was lighted with wax-lights in silver candlesticks. He took up the note which contained Miss Delancy's address, and which had been written by Matzek himself, at the solicitation of the servant Number One. After a perusal of the note, he laid it aside, and drawing note-paper towards him, proceeded to write the following lines to the young lady :

"MISS DELANCY :—I presume upon my age, and the fact that I have become the owner of a large tract of land adjoining your ancestral manor, to address you a note. You will pardon me for my presumption when you discover the motive which prompts me. You are about to present yourself to the public on the stage. Your family will all feel mortified that your pecuniary needs force you to this step. You can save yourself from this public notoriety, which must be offensive to one so elegantly descended and reared as you have been, in two ways. Pardon my familiarity with your family affairs. I could not become a large landholder in the immediate vicinity of the manor, without learning much about you and your family. Rumor says that you and your father are at temporary enmity, in consequence of his marrying a stranger. I have the assurance from one who knows your father intimately, that Arthur Delancy loves his daughter better than any one on earth ; that he regrets the marriage which has sundered so cruelly his family ties, and yearns to be reconciled, if possible, with his mother and daughter. Listen to me to the end, for I am an old man, with a kind heart, and mean well. My judgment, founded upon the experience of a long life, is, that when "blue blood" descends to marriage with an adventuress, an element of discord is introduced into a family, which prevents absolutely its

members from living under the same roof. Wisdom, under such circumstances, prompts a separation, but by no means dissolves the allegiance due from a daughter to her father. Take an old man's advice, Miss Delancy, and write to your father a kind note of interest in his welfare. Tell him that, although you cannot live with his wife, you respect and love him. Tell him that you are forced to the footlights for your living. I have ascertained a fact which will both startle and comfort you. The information is confidential, stranger to you as I am. Conceal this fact; for its disclosure will make your father unhappy, and will place him a thousand times further in his wife's power. Your father desires that it be kept secret. He has sold his prospective right to the manor for a large sum, and secretly. Therefore make friends with him by letter; for he has the means to save you from the stage, and he will do it, if you appeal to him. This disclosure which I have just penned has filled you with distress. The manor has passed away from your father. Now I am going to intrust you with another secret; and, for the sake of the kind wishes an old man has for you, I entreat you to reveal your acquaintance with it to no one—not even to your grandmother, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy. By a mysterious transaction, the reversion to the Delancy manor is now vested in your grandmother; and she intends that eventually you shall own the great estate. Your father knows nothing about this. Now, if your pride or feeling is too great to accept aid from your father; if you will not be reconciled to him, permit me, a banker of great resources, with no relatives, to offer you the exact yearly sum to keep off from the stage, which Matzek gives you to go on the stage. What is my motive? Kindness for a noble young woman, who is about to sacrifice herself upon the altar of duty. Do I ask any return from you? Do I demand an acquaintance with you, in consequence of this kindness? No! no! Never come into my presence, if you so wish. Only accept my offer. I cannot long enjoy the sunlight of this world. My race is almost run. But it would be sweet for an old man to think,

in his loneliness, that some persons would accept kindness from him ; that, when he was in his grave, some human hearts would turn, in tender recollection, to the old man under the sods.

“Very respectfully yours,

“DASHWOOD.”

The banker had written this note upon a delicately shaded pink sheet of paper. As he was about to put it in an envelope of the same hue taken from a perfumed drawer of the table, he paused to reflect. “The identification of this handwriting,” he said to himself, “may occasion me some confusion in the future. I will give her a back-hand chirography.” So he re-wrote the note in a different handwriting, and directed it to Miss Delancy, flinging his first note into the fire. He then rang the bell, and servant Number Two made his appearance ; a tall, impressive-looking Englishman, with side whiskers, and wearing the Dashwood livery for the street, light buff, with sable fur collar and cuffs. No metallic buttons, no gold lace glittered upon the banker’s retinue, only the star of gold, marked “Number Two,” glistened upon the left breast of the Englishman.

“Deliver this note at Miss Delancy’s house,” he said, “and do not wait for an answer.”

The man took the note, glanced at the address, bowed low, and withdrew.

An entire week elapsed, and no answer came to this communication. The banker smiled grimly to himself, and said : “A woman’s pride is generally purchaseable. But they say the pride of a Delancy is an immovable rock. Parbleu ! it *may* defeat me now.”

He waited patiently a few days longer, and then, one morning, the answer came, a delicately fashioned note in shape, but directed in a bold, almost masculine hand. He looked long and with interest at the direction. Then he opened the epistle and read thus :

"DEAR SIR :—Age and kind motive appeal very strongly to a woman's heart. I thank you for the wonderful information which you have obtained, and intrusted to me. I shall not disclose it. I must decline, however, your proffer of pecuniary assistance. I shall never place myself under obligation to any man while I have a faculty left to employ in my own support. The world speaks well of you. Therefore, allow me to sign myself,

"Respectfully, yours,

"MARIE DELANCY."

The banker crushed the note in his hand, and his eyes glittered. "I admire her pluck," he muttered. "She has the ring of the pure metal. She won't go near her father either, I'll warrant. She intends to fight it out alone. But by Heavens! I came to this city *to rule*; and a girl shall not be the first to thwart my wishes. I'll drive her from the footlights the very first night she comes there; no matter if she has the voice of Canens. I'll crush her, teach her my power, and then build her up again. Why, this girl is proud as Lucifer. I really believe I am mad with her. Where is your philosophy gone to, old man," he continued, addressing the remarks to himself. "Keep cool. It's only a girl, this first obstacle, and you'll have great intellects to conquer before your sway becomes perfect. Keep cool. You can soon teach her her place in your train. Crush her temporarily. That's the programme for you. Let me see. They say MacGregor's paper is bringing her out more than anything else. I'll have a talk with this brilliant fellow. He has a future."

CHAPTER XXV.

*" Oh ! heart of love and soul of fire !
 My spirit bows to thee ;
 Type of the ideals that inspire
 My dreams eternally ;
 I'd be a slave to such as thou,
 And deem myself a queen,
 If, sometimes, to my kneeling brow
 Those perfect lips might lean."*

Mary E. Bryan.



HEN Marie Delancy emerged from the delirium which accompanied her fever, her appetite returned and she asked feebly for food. The most delicate and suitable viands were immediately prepared for her, under the direction and advice of Matzek, who called daily, after hearing of her illness. This great operatic leader appreciated fully the musical treasure which MacGregor had sent him. He therefore spared no pains or expenditure to restore her to health. Soon the convalescent asked for Dream-child's society. She was notified that the physician had forbidden the nurse to admit any visitors. The evil influence of a shock to her feelings was anticipated and avoided. But day by day her strength returned, and at last she was able to sit up. There appeared to be no further necessity for withholding from her the truth. They gave her the letter the journalist had left for her. She broke the seal in surprise, and mastered the contents of the opening paragraph. The loss of Dream-child for a moment overpowered her. The tears trickled from her eyes, and she closed the palm of her hand over them to conceal them. So closely had the child woven itself into the meshes of her life, that her loss was like the loss of a near relative. But her lonely heart had already learned to bear the thorns of life unmurmuring, and she soon dried her tears, regained her self-control, and carefully studied the strange revelations of the editor's letter. It read thus :

"DEAR MISS DELANCY :—I have taken Dream-child, and

fled from your presence forever. I could not take her from you without a pang. I know how you love her, and that her little heart returns your affection. But when I proposed to her to choose between us, she chose me. One little heart, then, out of this great world of human beings, loves me better than any one else. I am not, then, as I fancied, utterly forsaken and desolate. Thank God! that my bleeding, crushed heart has one sympathizer. Merciful God! there must be something lovable then, even in me.

"Listen, now, to the revelation I shall make. Listen, for it is the exposure of an agonized soul to one, who, I believe, can appreciate honorable motives. My regard for you has been built up slowly, unconsciously. So bowed down was my spirit by the desertion of one who should have stood by my side through every adversity and trial, that I did not approach new acquaintances with that self-consciousness and caution which becomes a man who appreciates the influence of one sex upon another. I was so benumbed by long wretchedness and agony, that I did not see where I was walking. I was seeking to drown my ever-present distress by communion with music. It has always been god-like to me in its soothing power. And while I pursued the natural course of one who loved melody, and drew near to it when it came in my way, I formed a gradual intimacy with you. Was it not natural, was it not innocent as the instincts of a child? I never dreamed that I would love you. I believed that my power of loving had passed away forever, in the great shock which paralyzed my heart when my wife deserted me. You did not know that I was married. You did not know that though divorced from her by law, neither she nor I could marry again. You accepted intimacy with me with the innocence of a child, and with the instinct of gratitude for one who had evinced his determination to push your musical interests before the public. No blame attaches to you. My object in this letter is to prove to you that I do not feel that blame should attach to me. Bear witness for me that I never mentioned love in our inter-

course. Bear witness now, that I fled from you when your absence in your sick-room opened my eyes to the truth that I loved you. I have gone away from you forever ; fled to save you from reproach, and to gain that control over myself which the religion of Jesus teaches, and which the sound morality of the upright declares to be honorable. But going away from you, I bless you. The great lamp of love once lighted must burn until the sods of the grave extinguish it. I can come near you no more. I only hope that when the bell of memory sounds my name in your ears you will pity and honor the man who could not avoid loving you, but had strength and honor enough to fly from you when he discovered that presence was dangerous to himself, and hazardous to your fair fame. The man has passed away from your society forever. But the pen of the man still lives for your interests, and rest assured that when you face the world on the stage, that pen will be your friend and supporter to the end. Farewell.

“MACGREGOR.”

Slowly slid the letter from the white, emaciated fingers of the invalid, and fell upon the carpet of the room unheeded. A smile of ineffable sweetness played for a moment upon the pale lips, as if she heard the whisper of celestial music. Then she bowed her face upon her hands, and prayed long and earnestly to that God-man, who experienced every trial, every emotion of the human heart, that He might pity and relieve them. Then she looked up to the blue sky, and said softly to herself :

“God is good to have prompted him to this flight. Had he known how dearly I loved him we never could have separated.”

And thus, in the fulness of her young womanhood, she had won the only love she cared for on earth. It was the decree of destiny that she should love one fettered by the state, should love one whom she must endeavor to forget. When this last thought came to her, she smiled, and said :

“How can I forget one whom I shall pray for day and night

until I am in my grave? Oh! my God, may I not pray for this man all the days of my life?"

After the editor had left the house in which Miss Delancy was domiciled, he drove to furnished apartments, prepared for himself and Dream-child. He remained but a few weeks in these new rooms, as the summer heats were near at hand. He employed no new teacher for the little girl, but gave her in charge of the landlady, until his editorial duties would allow him to retire to his home in the country. He devoted himself assiduously to his profession, and it was remarked by the public that his editorials manifested even more care and finish than ever before. The maturity of his intellect was near. Daily study developed his powers and ripened his judgment. His life was above reproach. He had no time for dissipation, and was often repeating to himself the Turkish proverb: "The devil tempts all other men, but idle men tempt the devil." He rarely went visiting in the evening. Ordinary people in society bored him. Only at the banker's did he meet congenial company, and here, finally, his visits were exclusively directed. Never, however, would he go to Mr. Dashwood's, until Dream-child was safely and comfortably sleeping in her little bed adjoining his own room. The child was now his entire family, and he would never allow her in the evening to know the uneasiness of solitude. If she was wakeful, he ignored all invitations from the banker, and sat beside her bed talking her to sleep with all the skill of a mother, and all the wealth of expression and narrative which had been peculiar to him in his boyhood, when he had fascinated his school-fellows with his tales of wonder, and in his mature life when his skilful and complicated fictions had commanded the first of prices in the public magazines. But when the child had gone where she seemed to belong, to the realm of visions, he stole away from her, and called upon Mr. Dashwood. The banker had given instructions that whenever MacGregor called, and he was out in the evening, the servants should show him into the library. He knew, full well, that a library of rare books was

Paradise to the editor, and that the volumes would hold him entranced until his own return. On several occasions had Mr. Dashwood returned from entertainments after midnight, and found MacGregor buried in the mysteries of books, which few private libraries of the continent could boast. He always expressed his delight at finding the journalist so manifestly interested in his admirable collection.

"MacGregor," he said once upon finding his friend there late at night studying, and utterly unconscious of the hour, "you are a man after my own heart. The taste for books is the most refined of all. But you are a marvellous scholar. I feed upon your best editorials with a relish which you can hardly conceive. You shake off the chaff of authors so readily, and the grain only adheres to your pen. Why, man, you are not half appreciated in this city. With a head of crystal, and the irony of Lucian, the wit of Horace, and the discrimination of Theophrastus, you pen editorials upon the affairs of the day which are too subtle for the mass, but most exquisite for the cultured. Nay, let me speak. I am not given to adulation. I am a scholar speaking to a scholar. If this people, this herd, for so I must describe the masses everywhere, had the power of appreciating you as I have, and as the men have whom I summon here to meet you, they would clamor for your exaltation to a statesman's chair. Oh! it would be an elevation you deserve. Look at the men who represent the people in the Legislature of this State—libertines, retailers of rum in corner groceries, men to whom the English language is a hopeless labyrinth. And you, with no reproach upon your name, with no immorality for the *chronique scandaleuse* to report concerning you, with your blaze of wit; your familiarity with the history of the land and its laws, your just estimate of men and measures, you, you have to remain in the background while loafers fabricate the laws and execrate the gifts of eloquence."

"Very true, Mr. Dashwood. Educated men shrink from the contagion of the legislative halls. But they are needed in the press. Undazzled by the lustre of wealth, unbiassed by the

clamors of party, men of the highest character are required to be at the helm of the newspapers—those daily barques which sail into the peaceful harbors of families, so potent for good when well freighted with ideas, so omnipotent for evil when guided by the unprincipled. My conviction is, and it is founded upon study of past nations and present peoples, that the sole power to save this Republic from the fate of others resides in the press and the pulpit. Alarming evidences exist that these sources of reformation are being polluted by the men who control the treasuries of great corporate bodies. Newspapers are too often subsidized by corporations, and pulpits are silenced by liberal grants from the State, bolstering up their peculiar establishments. Give me but the selection of the editors of a State, and I will guarantee its perpetual integrity."

Thus did these two natural-born leaders of men pass many hours in converse. One was holding aloft a beautiful ideal as he toiled. The other, in the decline of life, was struggling for power, and hugging to himself the delusion that all men were purchasable. He dared not approach by open corruption the honest heart that warmed under the influence of his kindness and his culture. He had already purchased editors. But he had not yet discovered the weak point in this MacGregor, whom he most assuredly loved. How could he approach the subject of bribery, how could he divert from honest criticism in his journal this able man who looked into his face with the bold, free, open glance of integrity? Where was this giant of literature vulnerable? Was friendship an influence which would render unsteady the *littérateur's* pen? "Friendship sometimes weakens judgment," said this astute old man to himself. "I will be his friend with a motive. I must be his friend anyway, for he fascinates me, old and shattered in moral convictions as I am. If there is no conceivable method by which to influence his pen from the straight line of his belief, I shall reconsider my rejection of a belief in God. Strange man! you have resuscitated for a moment my youthful belief in manhood. But you must, if human devices can move you, reverse the edict

in favor of Marie Delancy. She shall not tread the stage in triumph."

Patiently, then, he cultivated the friendship of MacGregor, trusting to time and opportunity to develop the man's weak point, by which he might rule him and influence him to his own purposes. He was not long in ascertaining that the editor's country home was near to his own recent purchase of land. The banker had bought several farms on one side of the Delancy Manor, and MacGregor's property was upon the opposite side of the manor. When Mr. Dashwood ascertained that the journalist was about to leave the city for his summer vacation, he notified him of his recent purchases of farms, and desired him, during his sojourn in the country, to walk over to his mansion, then in process of erection, and see the style of home and grounds in which the banker proposed to entertain his friends after a time. The editor thanked him for the privilege, and received from Mr. Dashwood a note of introduction to the architect who had charge of the improvements.

Upon his arrival at his country home, the editor immediately commenced to superintend, in person, the education of Dream-child, which had been so abruptly broken in upon by the illness of Miss Delancy. He became her tutor and constant companion. He established regular hours for hearing her lessons, and in the intervals of study wandered with her over the whole country in his neighborhood. He purchased a black pony for her, and she accompanied him in long journeys into the woods and mountains of the county. The beauty of this child, and the ease with which she managed her pony, were remarked by all the people of the surrounding farms. MacGregor always walked beside her, preferring that manner of exercise to any other, and he always carried with him a gun or fishing-rod. The marvellous loveliness of the little rider attracted to her many kind salutations from the farmers and their families; and often the two travellers were solicited to stop and refresh themselves with fresh milk and berries, an invitation which they frequently accepted. But finally, by some

natural familiarity arising from her rapidly increasing acquaintance with the people of the neighborhood, Dream-child was brought so closely in contact with certain people that she revealed to them her knowledge of their secret thoughts. This caused consternation in one or two households. The rumor of her power travelled far and wide, was ridiculed, or acquiesced in, according to the peculiar mental formation of the hearers, but gradually became a settled truth with many. People began to avoid her as one to be dreaded. Few wear such immaculate hearts within them that they can afford to have their secret thoughts discussed by their neighbors. But some of the loveliest and purest women of the farms formed ardent attachment to the child, and begged MacGregor to allow them sometimes to have her exclusive society for a day, when he allowed her a respite from study. He occasionally acceded to these requests, and the golden-haired elf became enthroned queen of many hearts. But the poetic child manifested uneasiness if she were detained away from the editor long. He was her king, her ideal, her chief delight.

One day, as the two passed slowly along the highway bounding the Delancy Manor on the east, he pointed out to her the venerable mansion of the estate, and told her of the two tragedies which had rendered the manor and its late proprietors so notorious in the county. He showed her the grave of the unknown, and the location of the room where Hartwell was supposed to have been murdered. The child had heard the story from the wives of the farmers, and had now appealed to MacGregor to identify the localities for her. She sat now with her eager, beautiful face overlooking the grounds of the manor, while the editor held her pony by the head, and narrated the whole history of the murder, and the subsequent trial, as it was known to the public. The fact that her beloved Tooty's father had been on trial for his life enhanced the interest of the fearful tale for her. At last she said, pushing away from her eyes the long, dishevelled, golden mist of hair, which MacGre-

gor would never allow her to confine in any way, and, looking up into his face, "That sailor knows who did it."

"Yes, my darling," he said, "but you must never mention to any one until I authorize you to do so, what the old sailor's heart seemed to say to you. The story might get back to him in some way, and then he might take the alarm, and escape. We want to apprehend that sailor, and he is keeping himself concealed for some reason. The police in the city are hunting for him. So you must keep your mouth shut."

"Poor man!" she said, thoughtfully. "He don't believe in any God, and yet he is so kind. I don't know what I should do without my poll parrot. Do you think, MacGregor, that the old sailor did it himself?"

"I can't tell who did it, Dream-child," he answered. "The old sailor knows something about it. He may be innocent himself. But the police are very anxious to find out who this man is. So, as your eyes are very quick to recognize people you have once seen, you must always be on the lookout to identify the sailor."

"Yes," she said, "I should know him by his eyes, oh! such eyes!"

As they passed on their way at length, she asked him many questions regarding the murder, indicating that the mystery had taken a profound hold upon her imagination. After a time she became very silent, her pony slowly walking on beside MacGregor. Finally her companion had ceased to think of the subject, and was absorbed in reflections regarding Miss Delancy's future in the metropolis, when suddenly the child broke the silence with the question:

"What will they do with the sailor if he killed Mr. Hartwell?"

"Hang him," said the editor.

"What is that?" she asked.

He explained to her the details of an execution. She was horrified at his description, and freely expressed her disapprobation.

"That is wicked, MacGregor."

"No," he said, "such men are enemies of the people, and they must be hung to deter other people from doing similar acts."

"No, no," she said, emphatically. "Jesus said we must love our enemies, and we can't love them if we kill them."

He endeavored to explain to her the policy of the State in these matters, and the inadequacy of milder remedies to protect the public from criminals, but it was all unavailing. The deliberate killing of an enemy seemed to her innocent heart to be so utterly repugnant to the principles inculcated by the Saviour of men, that she would not be convinced by all the logic of the State. She maintained that love and killing could not exist together in a Christian soul. He was greatly amused at her warmth, and encouraged her to go on in her child-like enunciation of the principles of Christianity. She would not yield her point that all enemies should be forgiven.

"Why, MacGregor," she said at length, "do you think Jesus Christ would take hold of a rope and pull a man up to a branch and keep holding on to the end of the rope till the poor man was choked to death? Oh! no, no. I've seen a good many pictures of Jesus, but I never saw a picture where He was doing that. I don't believe He would do it. And Tooty says if we want to go to heaven we mustn't do anything that He wouldn't do."

Her companion was silent. Her suggestion of a picture of Christ as an executioner had a wonderful depth of satire for his mind. He had seen paintings of Jesus performing faithfully the duties of men. He had seen him working at the carpenter's bench, overseeing the business of fishing, providing food for the multitude, and performing the part of physician. But he had never seen the gentle teacher of Galilee acting as an executioner, rope in hand. Was it conceivable that the Son of God would deliberately be a participator in a hanging of a human being? Did not such an attitude conflict with the whole conception of Jesus as a lover of every individual hu-

manity? The more he pondered the revolting and yet pertinent presentation of the case by the child, the more was he convinced that Christ, the example for all, would never have been a party to an execution, the deliberate strangling of a man to death. And the question arose before him: Can a Christian consent to do that in his official capacity which Christ would never have done under any circumstances? It was not the first time this strange child had fallen upon the logic of society and the State like a bolt of light from above. He had often seen how deeply the loving and forgiving nature of the Crucified had influenced the imagination of the child. She would stand long, and with ever fresh interest, before pictures of the Saviour gathering little children about Him with the request: "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." And this tender-hearted, loving child had now been shocked at the idea that that exquisite being whom she adored could by any possibility be deemed capable of sanctioning an execution.

But the terrible spectacle of the vengeance of the State had been unfolded to her, and her affrighted soul had shrunk away into its native gentleness and its idealism of Christ for protection from evil logic. She would not be silenced now, but returned again and again to the subject. Finally, she said:

"Dream-child will not help you find the old sailor, for you are going to kill him. If I see the sailor I will tell him to run, for people suspect him, and he will die if he stays."

From this day forward her lips closed upon the subject, and no arts could draw her into conversation regarding this sailor again. She was full of indignation at the cruelty of men; and the suggestion to her of an ultimate execution had destroyed forever the expectations of the detective that her power of insight might be serviceable in accomplishing the ends of justice. This agent of the police came one day to visit her in the country, but the moment he attempted to obtain from her a direct version of what had occurred while she sat in the sailor's lap in the jewelry shop regarding Hartwell's death, she ran away from him in terror, and no persuasion would recall her again.

into his presence. The white soul of the golden-haired was too pure to reflect the blood-stains of human justice. Was she not herself, like the God-man, an apparition from the supernatural?

CHAPTER XXVI.

"There is a radiant beauty on the hills."

Mollie E. Moore.

*"What spell of enchantment is that which enthralls me
When winding the mystical mazes of dreams?"*

Julia L. Keyes.

BEVERLY! What a name of wonder! What a dream of enchantment! What a realization of all that a poet's fancy attaches to the structures of the Celestial City! Its magnificent terraces, glowing with exotic flowers, its wooded lawns, its dashing waterfalls, its smooth, glassy streams moving gently under drooping elms, its marvellous vistas, its lakes, and fairy temples, rich in gems of sculpture, its shady retreats, where the ancient oaks and beeches were alive with the twitter of birds, some darting through the branches, others skimming along the grass, and occasionally rippling the streams with the dip of their fleet wings. Little children gazed in speechless amazement through its hedges, and then their voices broke forth in rapturous praise. Birds were singing in wild rivalry amid the foliage, as if they had never known the fear of man. The native songsters recognized in the master of Beverly their friend. Here were they cared for, and protected from the hunters. They deserted other haunts, at length, and congregated to this paradise. Hear that linnet with his sweet, rolling warble! See that bob-o'-link, wheeling his musical flight up from the meadow! There darts the scarlet tanager, brilliant in color, and gifted in song. See that bright creature darting like a flash of fire amid the leaves. Do you not know it—the

golden oriole? He is a songster, too, but his song is brief. The bay-winged buntings fly here, too, some days, and song sparrows, and red-eyed, warbling fly-catchers. Oh! see that bob-o'-link! He is so crazy to tell of his adventures, that he cannot wait till he is settled on that branch, but commences in the air. See him! see him! balancing away up there on the highest sprig of that tree which can hardly hold his weight. Hear the little rascal sing, as if it was his first song, and he couldn't have too much of it. Ah! there's the restless swallow. How he darts along the grass like lightning, and then sweeps high away from earth through the tree-tops! Come on, stranger. You are only at the entrance of Beverly. These terraces, loaded with carefully watched exotics on the right, are only the decoration of a hill once rocky and barren. These carefully guarded woods alive with birds are only the mask to the great estate. Rumor has it that beyond all these lies the real Beverly, the palace on the slope of a mountain. True, you can catch a glimpse of a lake girt with summer-houses of marble, and on a green isle in its midst, a fountain from a rocky altitude pours down incessant sheets of water, quivering in the sunlight. You see all this from the porter's gate, and yet you know nothing of Beverly.

One morning in midsummer a horseman reined in his black steed before the huge, white marble elephants which flanked the silver-barred gate of Beverly. Four keepers of the gate immediately appeared from the vine-clad porter's lodge, arrayed in scarlet dress, wearing red caps with white plumes, and armed with sabres. The horseman presented his pass to one who appeared to be the chief of the keepers. The man glanced at the bold signature at the bottom of the pass.

"It is our master's own hand," he said. "Enter, for you are most welcome, sir."

The gate swung back widely, and the horseman entered. The gate closed behind him with a musical clang. A page now emerged from the porter's lodge, clothed in a white velvet suit, with silver belt, and a silver star upon his white velvet

cap. He carried in his hand a small silver bugle, and saying, "I am the guide, sir ; please follow me," he walked ahead upon the hard gravelled road at a rapid pace, the rider walking his horse behind him. When they had gone a quarter of a mile, they reached the lake shore, and turned abruptly to the right, still following the gravelled road. The rider gazed upon the exquisite marble summer-houses upon the shore of the lake, with their slender Corinthian columns and their rows of statuary, and inquired of the page their use. The guide assured him they were bathing-houses for the use of the guests of his master. Any one who desired seclusion, a bath, or private study, could find in each little temple every convenience for these purposes. Each summer-house was supplied with a library, with bouquets of fresh flowers every morning, and with an elegant lunch on a tray of gold every noon. A solitary sentinel in a scarlet dress was seen pacing the shore, who, according to the guide, was ever on the alert to wait upon guests who might stray in this direction for study, or for a bath. The instant the rider turned from the lake, he saw far away before him a wood, covering a dome-shaped hill, and flanked on either side by a cataract, which seemed to leap from an impenetrable forest on to the meadows below. At the foot of these waterfalls, deer were stalking about. As he approached nearer, the number was augmented by others, which sprang up from the grass and gazed at the intruder. When he reached the vicinity of the dome hill and the cascades, he discovered that the road led through a rocky pass, between the hill and one of the waterfalls. This pass had been so artfully disguised with foliage, that it could only be discovered upon a near approach, and the illusion was retained until the last moment, that the road here was at an end. With a gentle ascent, the road now led up through the pass, gray rocks, moist with water, towering on either side, and crowned at the summit where the sides of the pass cut sharply against the blue of the sky, with evergreens densely crowded.

This narrow way was long, and gave no glimpse of what was

beyond. Nearer and nearer came the termination of the pass. It was over at length, this wild way cut by the Ancient of Days before man lived, and then came the surprise of Art. The hoofs of the steed clattered upon the marble floor of a temple which was built against and over the end of the pass. So noble a hall, enriched with statues of the classical divinities, and so graceful in fluted columns, **seemed too like the hasty erections of the wizard, Sleep.**

"Am I dreaming, my guide?" said the rider, as the page paused to allow him to survey the chaste beauties of the place. "Here is the work of years, it seems to me. And here are statues worthy of Athens: Apollo, Nemesis, Orthia, Iris, Eos, and Ganymedes. How could human hands have completed these wonders in the brief period of one year?"

The White Page smiled, but made no response, seeming to enjoy the stranger's amazement.

"Now I know that I am dreaming," said the rider. "No sound comes from your lips, and you too are a myth."

"Pardon me, sir," said the youth, "I mistook your words for amazement, and not for interrogatory. It cannot be possible that you have gained admittance here and do not know the fame of my master. He is immensely wealthy, and a great head is his to execute. When he oversees architects they expedite matters."

"But one brief year, my guide; think of that."

"It matters not," said the page. "The architects put thousands of skilful mechanics to work. They worked by day, and others supplied their places at night. The click of the hammers and chisels was incessant, sir. It was an army of workmen that poured in upon this estate. The great marvel of Beverly, sir, is the executive head of its master. Why, sir, one of the architects assured me that the plans of everything here were drawn years ago by the hand of my master. He only awaited the perfection of his financial schemes, to put thousands of men at work upon Beverly."

"Impossible story," replied the horseman. "He is an

Englishman, and to have drawn plans for the peculiar configuration of these grounds would have required great prior familiarity with them."

"Ah! there's the defect of the story, sir. I am confident my master is no Englishman. His accent refutes that theory. If ever the energy and will of the American people were typified in one person, my master is that man. It makes no difference what people have been taught to believe concerning him. He knows the human heart thoroughly. *Populus vult decipi*, and he has deceived them, no doubt. My dear sir, he knows every foot of this surrounding country, and must have been born here."

"It may be, it may be," said the rider, thoughtfully. "But tell me, my guide, how happens it that you converse so like a youth of education?"

"Because I am the graduate of an American college," was the quiet response.

"And you but a guide?" said the horseman.

"My master pays better than professional pursuits would pay one of my age," said the youth.

"But then the term 'Master' ill becomes a free-born, educated American youth," said the rider, looking steadily into his handsome face.

"Terms are nothing to Americans, sir, so that we have the substance of life's pursuit. I might wear the burden of pride and starve under it. I am handsomely requited for my services. Kindness is always exhibited to me. What matters it whether you call your superior 'master' or 'employer'? I am the servant of a scholar who loves educated men. His terms are but the terms of discipline. I called my teacher at the preparatory school 'the master.' Mr. Dashwood is farther divided from me in learning than was 'the master' from me then. But we have no time to differ as to terms. Make ready for the next revelation, and fix your eyes upon the blue-silk curtain which hangs across the farther end of the temple."

The horseman looked at this curtain, which he had supposed

to be a partition in the white-marble temple, while the guide raised the silver bugle to his lips and blew a loud blast. Instantly, by some unseen agency, the blue silk rolled slowly up, and he saw, far away perched upon a mountain crag, *Beverly* ! Was it a painting, or was it a dream? If a painting, the Deity had sketched it. If a dream, he hoped to dream forever. Across the green valley, and upon a cliff, apparently inaccessible, so high and abrupt was the mountain wall, reigned the fairy-like pinnacles and colonnades of the palace of Dashwood ; so white, so ethereal, so like the effulgent, graceful structures the white clouds form in the firmament, that, for a moment, the delusion was powerful that it was a cloud temple resting upon the shoulder of the mountain. Low shrubs of evergreens around gave to it stateliness, and not a tree diverted the eye from its graceful lines traced against the azure of heaven. Long, long he gazed upon it, and from a lateral cloud of white a pencil of the sun's rays glanced upon it and glorified it.

"Strange being," he muttered to himself, as the relaxed reins fell upon the neck of his black steed motionless in the temple. "You are the artist, the poet, the *littérateur*, the Cræsus, the genius, all in one. You are superb, a mediocrist in nothing. How can you, endowed with such transcendent gifts, ignore the King of Beauty? How can you, in the decline of life, have no aspirations to a holy immortality beyond the grave? And you would have me become subservient to your career, and augmentative of your splendor. Where truth and magnanimity sway you, I will follow and aid you with my pen. But tempt me not to sacrifice the pure and unbending principles of Christianity, for there am I rooted." He gazed for a few moments at this magnificent picture having so much of the illusion of a painting framed in marble, then turning to the guide, who stood at ease, with his silver bugle under his arm, he said :

"We shall reach Beverly, I doubt not, from the rear."

"You have solved the mystery," replied the youth, "which has puzzled strong men and lovely women. Some of our visitors would have turned back, thinking it was only the art of the

painter. Yes, we shall climb to the palace by a circuitous road in the rear."

They remained motionless for a few moments longer, as the view was entrancing. The summit of the hill where they stood had been selected by Dashwood as the point from which visitors should first view his summer home. It was divided from the mountain, where the palace was exalted above all the surrounding country, by a broad green valley dotted with trees and traversed by streams. As the rider looked down to it he saw horses, thoroughbreds, roaming in freedom over the meadows. At the right, the valley was closed against the west winds by a dense and dark forest, whence issued a brook. At the left, the valley terminated in a lake, apparently a half mile wide, upon which two sail-boats were lazily moving in the faint breeze. The boat-houses upon the margin of the lake were miniature Moslem temples, and from the flagstaff at the summit of the dome of each a blue silken banner was floating. In the lake was seen a long green island with trees clustered at one end, and with an irregular mass of rocks at the other, where, the guide informed the stranger, a grotto was hidden, and spacious enough to contain large cabinets of sea-shells and marine animals, and plants preserved in jars for the contemplation of the scientific and the curious. Beyond the lake, hills, rocky or covered with woods, were visible.

After a complete survey of the landscape they commenced the descent into the valley by an easy but rocky road. At intervals they passed caves chiselled out of the rock where bright waters were gurgling up into stone basins, and then crossing the road to leap in waterfalls upon the meadows below. Groups of Grecian gods and goddesses in marble were congregated at these caves, and upon reaching the meadow-lands below, the rider saw a party of wood nymphs standing under a cluster of trees, and in the attitude of disputing about the proper road to take, as three well-beaten ways here diverged, and might all lead across the valley to Beverly.

"One road," said the guide, "will take you around the west-

ern side of the mountain to the great race-track which the palace park overlooks. Another leads away around the northern end of the lake to the woods where my master has located his menagerie of beasts and reptiles, and this third one, after winding through the valley, sweeps around to the eastern side of the mountain, and brings you up to Beverly from the rear. We will, therefore, take the last one. But I will first signal to my master that you are coming."

The speaker raised the silver bugle to his lips and sounded a long call to the pinnacles, towers, and corridors of the palace, which now seemed to be nearly over their heads, and in contact with the blue canopy of heaven. Startling echoes reverberated along the sides of the valley. Then came silence, followed by the booming of a cannon and a puff of smoke from the palace above. A large blue banner fluttered up to the top of a flag-staff on a tower of Beverly, and then people were seen crowding the galleries of the ethereal structure, and ladies and gentlemen waved handkerchiefs and hats in welcome to the stranger so far below them. He returned the compliment by waving his handkerchief to the many eager faces looking down upon him. Then the guide conducted him across the valley. On their way they passed near droves of horses of every hue peculiar to the gracefully limbed thoroughbreds of Asia, Africa, and Europe. Here were steeds with the blood of Flying Childers, Eclipse, Spiletta, and Marske in their veins, and exquisite racers from the Kentucky pastures, with the sunlight glancing from their chestnut coats. Passing, after a time, the meadows, where these monarchs of the turf were leisurely grazing, the rider and his guide crossed a brook bordered by shrubs, and entered a gloomy wood, where the sunlight was cut off by the huge cliff crested by Beverly. Into the recesses of this forest they penetrated, and found the road firm and smooth, but the sombre nature of the trees and mosses clinging to the rocks almost appalling. On, on, and still on, they walked, at rapid pace, the white page leading, the horseman following, and wondering where the ascent to Beverly would begin. There was

no indication of rising around here. Beside the curving forest road ever stood the huge perpendicular side of the mountain of rock, whose summit was undistinguishable in the towering mass of trees overhead the travellers. At last, after a distance of four miles had been traversed, they emerged into an open country skirted by woods and watered by a curving stream. Here the road turned abruptly to the northward and commenced to rise rapidly. They were surely now ascending the southern slope of the mountain. Forest-trees were rare upon it. But it was terraced all the way to the summit. Flowers and fruit-trees were growing everywhere, and springs were gushing bright from their native rock, and travelling down the mountain in channels prepared by the horticulturists.

At length they reached a point in the ascent where the road curved away to the westward, the fruit-trees and flowers still bordering the way. Again the ascent became arduous, but they soon came out upon a plateau of great extent, upon which was seen a circular racing-track, surrounded by a circle of elms. Looking upward the horseman now beheld once more the fairy-like grace of the palace of Beverly. He could see the figures of women, clothed in all the elegance and beauty of their summer robes, seated upon the galleries with their beaux, or reading apart, in verandahs shaded by vines. It was the southern side he was approaching, and arbors had been erected upon the piazza, some of which seemed to be one sheet of pink or white roses. The breeze had been freshening as he ascended the mountain, and he found now that it was passing over the summit at this great altitude with refreshing coolness and power. What was his amazement, upon looking behind him, to see apparently the whole country lying below him. The Hudson river was visible for many miles, moving on its majestic way to the sea. He overlooked villages, towns, streams, valleys, and hills. The view was grand and enchanting. Far away below him he recognized the great manor of the Delancy family, and near it his own little summer home. Why had no one before the advent of Mr. Dashwood seized upon this sublime

altitude for a summer retreat? The absence of shade-trees on the shoulder of the mountain was more than compensated for by the eternal breeze which fanned its way through the palace, and by the variety of the scenery, overlooked by all the windows. An instant's reflection enabled the horseman to realize that nothing but immense wealth could have made this height habitable.

The guide conducted the rider to the foot of a long flight of marble steps leading up to the palace, and here indicated that the ascent must now be made on foot. A groom came forward from the racing stables on the plateau, at the sound of the guide's bugle, and relieved the rider of his horse. Then the guide led the way up the steps. At the blast of the bugle many of the guests above had hastened to the edge of the piazza to look down upon the new-comer. They welcomed him by waving handkerchiefs and scarfs, and before he had ascended half way he was enabled to recognize several familiar faces. He saw that the *élite* of the metropolis were the guests at Beverly. That man must be hard as adamant who feels not a thrill of pleasure at being welcomed by youth, beauty, and genius. All of these were waiting for him now. His eyes brightened, and he removed his hat, as he ascended the steps, in acknowledgment of their greeting. At last he stood upon the broad marble platform at the top, and found that a pavilion of blue and white silk was erected over the silver-barred gate which admitted him to the guests upon the piazza. He found that the edge of this piazza was protected by a silver-barred bannister, from which the guests of the house could look down on racing days to the splendid circular course just below them. Passing through the pavilion he was met and greeted warmly by acquaintances, and introduced to many people of distinction, who had heard of his fame as a *littérateur*. Then came forward, from the broad steps of Beverly, its white-haired master to greet him. With both hands extended the old gentleman welcomed him, and taking him by the arm conducted him into the palace. The youth who had led him over the estate now lifted

his silver bugle once more to his lips and blew a long blast. At that signal the cannon again roared its mighty welcome.

Upon mounting to the level of the piazza the visitor had lifted his eyes to the windows, roofs, corridors, and pinnacles of the palace, and found that the light structure was, as he had supposed, built of wood, and painted a dazzling white. Open work, lattices, balconies, and colonnades were everywhere. The master of Beverly conducted him under a great arch, guarded on either side by white-marble genii, and instantly he was in the midst of a vast conservatory of flowers of delicious perfume. Half a dozen young ladies in summer dress were carefully culling from this treasury of beauty flowers for bouquets. One of them recognized the new guest of Mr. Dashwood, and came towards him with a smile.

"Welcome, Mr. MacGregor," she said. "I am so glad you have come up to Heaven. You can appreciate it, and now Mr. Dashwood will be at peace. He has been the only dissatisfied spirit in this realm : and all because a certain editor failed to make his appearance."

"Yes," said the master of Beverly, "peace can only come from love. I love MacGregor, and he knows it. He is my sweetheart so far, and I shall pine for him until I find a better one, that gentle, unselfish, refined, exquisite creature, I have been so long seeking for among women."

"You are too fickle, Mr. Dashwood," replied the young lady, with a smile. "We are all refined, exquisite creatures here, and you know it. But as to the ladies here being all gentle and unselfish, that's another matter. Here, Mr. MacGregor," she said, detaching a pink rose-bud from its bush, and adjusting it to his button-hole, "I put my color upon you at your very entrance into the enchanted palace. Remember, now, that I was the first lady to honor you here. Do you hear me?"

"I have heard nothing, seen nothing, but you," he said, bowing gallantly, "since this realm of flowers was revealed to me. You remember that you are bound to me by a promise made

in New York, to reveal all your secrets for an entire year to me."

"Yes ! I remember," she said, with a blush. "But you are mistaken about that gentleman's influence over me. Indeed you are."

CHAPTER XXVII.

*"Such bowers of rest do the angels plan
For the earth-worn, weary soul of man ;
And none have the power to disinherit,
From its world of dreams, the Ideal spirit."*

Florence Anderson.

AFTER leaving the conservatory of flowers, the master of Beverly pushed aside a yellow-satin curtain, and exposed a great hall running through the entire length of the palace. It was carpeted with white tapestry carpet, and was lighted from skylights in the roof. The building was four stories in height, and was divided into two parts by the hall, all the rooms on either side, from the foundation to the roof, opening upon corridors, which enabled the guests to lean upon the slender oaken railing, and look down to the white tapestry carpet below. The staircases all came down laterally, so that the grand hall was free of any obstruction from floor to roof. Here were the grand balls of Beverly given. The extreme ends of the hall were lighted by great Gothic windows of stained glass, in colors of blue and gold. Over every lateral entrance into this hall curtains of gold and white satin were parted and looped back with cords and tassels of silver. Upon the railings of the corridors above the same hues of satin were festooned, the gatherings of the folds being held in the beaks of silver eagles with expanded wings. From every wall and corridor jutted silver brackets holding innumerable white wax candles. At the ends of this spacious dancing-hall, and just in front of the great Gothic windows, stood two lofty

silver trees, whose branches were filled with wax-lights in sockets of glass. On occasions of grand balls and masquerades, the white carpet was removed, exposing a dancing floor of polished whitewood. On such occasions also the curtain was drawn to one side which divided the hall from the conservatory. Drawing-rooms, supper-rooms, and flirtation rooms opened into this hall not by doors, but by arches covered with golden and white satin curtains. Into one of the flirtation rooms as they passed it Mr. Dashwood looked, and finding it unoccupied, he requested his new guest to inspect it. The entrance was guarded by a white-marble statue of Harpocrates with his finger upon his lip. The apartment was small and octagonal, carpeted with a lavender-colored carpet, dotted with pink rose-buds. The walls were hung with lavender-colored silk, and from them jutted slender silver statues of Mercury, with winged heels and cap, holding a small glass saucer in his hand, in which stood a tiny silver Cupid with a long and slender pink wax-light in his little hand looking for lovers. Divans covered with lavender silk and showing carved ivory legs were against the walls, and on a centre table of ivory stood a statuette cut in pink marble of Psyche arousing Cupid. A book on the language of flowers was also on the table, bound in white velvet and lettered on the cover in silver letters. The ceiling of the room was frescoed with a procession of fairies carrying roses and drawing their queen in a car of silver. The windows were small and circular, four in number, and each with a stained-glass pink rose in the centre.

As the two left the flirtation room they heard the light laughter of women, and Mr. Dashwood said:

"They are a party who are having a late breakfast. Everybody in this house enjoys himself in his own time and way. We can peep in upon them for an instant without being seen. Come on."

He crossed the hall as he spoke, and drew aside a curtain far enough to allow MacGregor a glimpse of the scene within. Around a circular table of mahogany covered with silver

plates, and with a polished coffee urn of pure gold at one end, sat a party of young ladies breakfasting, and attended by a colored servant in a scarlet dress with a gold star upon his left breast. The ceiling of the apartment was frescoed, the walls painted white, the curtains of the windows pink silk with over curtains of white lace, the floor polished wood. Paintings were hung upon the walls, and canary birds were singing in golden cages suspended in the windows. The scene was as merry and bright as youth and *insouciance* could make it. Miss Cartright, who presided at the coffee urn, was the impersonation of youthful innocence in her white robe with blue ornaments, the wealth of her golden hair falling to the waist. The young lady next her, Miss Savage, almost spiritual in her blonde beauty and her brown eyes, sat with her elbow upon the table, and a glass of champagne in her delicate fingers, through which she was watching the play of the sunlight upon the golden wine as she held it aloft. She was chatting incessantly, and her remarks seemed to cause the outbursts of merriment which had reached the ears of Dashwood and MacGregor. Her dress was a robe of rose-colored tulle, the puffings separated by black and white lace. In the chair adjoining her sat a superb brunette, her hair black as the raven's wing, her eyes large and voluptuous, her form erect and patrician as that of a belle of Madrid, and her voice as sweetly modulated as the notes of a flute. A black-lace dress over white became her well, and a red flower was caught in the backward sweep of her luxuriant hair.

"Who is that?" whispered MacGregor to his companion, as with the quick glance of a *connoisseur* he detected the superb beauty of the young lady. "Surely it is the face of Statira revealed to the moderns. Are you a thaumaturgist, Dashwood?"

"No," whispered the banker. "Money is the magician which gathers the loveliest to Beverly palace. That beautiful girl is of native growth, a Miss Renwood, of New York. Her father is a wealthy broker, her mother of the old Delaplaine stock. She is the *fiancée* of Senator Hinton, whom she cares

for not a farthing. Her family have cajoled her into the engagement. I wish you would employ your fascinations upon her and break up the affair."

"Excuse me," was the response. "I shall never take stock in women."

"Ah!" responded the banker, in the same subdued tone requisite to keep these beautiful birds from fluttering away. "So the scholarly MacGregor has learned wisdom early in life. *Felix, quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum*. And so I must devote all my energies to break down my friend's prejudices against the sex. I am determined upon it, MacGregor. I am going to present you to every superior woman in the land, until that flinty heart is softened by Cupid."

"*Hoc opus, hic labor est*," replied the editor. "The erection of Beverly is a child's task beside what you have undertaken now."

"We shall see, we shall see," responded the banker, letting go his hold upon the curtain which fell back to its place, and then, turning down the hall, he led his guest off to the suite of rooms which he had reserved especially for him. On their way they encountered a party of ladies, making for the front of the palace, to whom the master of Beverly addressed himself and made them acquainted with the editor. As they passed on Mr. Dashwood said:

"I want you to remember and cultivate the friendship of that lady who wore the *ciel*-blue silk, under an over-dress of transparent white material ornamented with feathery blue ruchings. You noticed her just now, didn't you?"

"The one with blonde hair?" inquired the editor.

"Yes; that is the one I introduced to you as Miss Dupont. She is an authoress and will make her mark in the world, for though very young her imagination is bold, and her power of expression quite felicitous. Don't forget this request, and mention her in your literary columns if you think she deserves it."

"All right," said MacGregor. "But where in the name of the marvellous are you taking me to?"

They had just passed out of an apartment, through a door which a servant in silver and white livery opened for them, and found themselves standing upon a green lawn in the open air. Behind them the polygonal walls of the palace were lifting their graceful architecture against the cloudless blue of the sky.

"I am taking you, my dear friend, where very few guests of this place ever gain admittance. And I want you to appreciate the compliment. I have assigned you rooms in a wing of Beverly, where I live, and where no one else but you and my servants can enter. I do this out of my regard for you. My private library is in this wing, and adjoins my own rooms. I shall give you the corresponding suite on the other side of the library, so that you can have access to me and to it, when no other guest can."

"You honor me, Mr. Dashwood, beyond my deserts," said Macgregor. "I am a new acquaintance."

"So are all these people, my dear sir; but a stranger in a strange land must feel like confiding in and leaning upon some one more than others. Your scholarship and your tastes draw me to you. Allow me to call you my friend. Even the poorest wretch on earth may ask for friendship. I have no friends. I beg of you to be something more to me than all these fashionable people are. If misfortune should overtake me, how long would my present guests stand by me. No, no, make no remonstrance. Accept me as a friend, and come on into the secret recesses of Beverly."

The editor could not refuse an appeal addressed so feelingly to his heart. He was touched by the banker's serious tones. The opulent owner of the place extended his hand. The man caught it, grasped it warmly, and said:

"You are a noble, warm-hearted fellow, Dashwood, and I will try to be a true and grateful friend to you."

"Don't use that word 'grateful' to me," was the reply. "It is not appropriate. It is I who owe the debt of gratitude."

"You! You amaze me, sir."

Mr. Dashwood hesitated a moment before he responded to the editor's words of surprise. Then he said :

"You have made the promise of friendship. The sacred word has come from honorable lips. *Fugit irrevocabile verbum*. Know, then, that I believe the first act of true friendship is confidence. I must trust to your honor."

"Very well," said the editor. "Try me." He wondered what was coming next. They had paused upon the grass in a court-yard of the palace. The wing to which they were going was just ahead of them, and was attached to the main building by a fairy-like, single-span bridge, covered and latticed, the red roses nodding from the openings in the wood-work, as if a conservatory was concealed within. Looking up to the blue heaven above him the master of Beverly said :

"MacGregor, you believe that an impalpable essence of being exists in space, denominated God, and that he is a respecter of truth and true words. Will you promise me that you will never use to my detriment the knowledge of a fact which I am about to disclose to you? The fact simply relates to an old meeting I once had with you, which you have forgotten."

"I remember all my interviews with you, Dashwood ; you are mistaken."

"No matter," was the response. "If you are so confident there can be no harm in your pledging your word to keep my secret."

"Very well," said MacGregor. "I will never use to your disadvantage any information you may give, regarding any of my former interviews with you."

"You promise this?"

"I do."

"And your promise covers all the years of your past life?"

"Certainly," was the response. The banker drew nearer to the side of MacGregor, looked at the open windows of the palace to see that no strange ears were lurking there, and then whispered :

"I am the man whose life you saved from assassins in the

street of New York. I was attacked by men unknown to me, and doubtless they intended to murder and then rob me. You saved my life. I owe to you the greatest debt that one human being can owe to another. This is the first confidence of friendship. I shall tell you no more now. You see that you are welcome to my home forever, as no other guest can be. Come on now. I am going to locate you near me. You have a key to the mysteries of Beverly as potent as the ring with which the shepherd Gyges penetrated into the palace of King Candaules. Come on, friend."

In speechless amazement MacGregor followed the master of the estate across the lawn to the airy, graceful structure which constituted a wing of the palace. The brave deed performed under the impulse of the moment had won the editor a powerful friend. This, then, was the secret of the banker's persistent efforts to cultivate his friendship. He had fancied that perhaps Dashwood was cultivating intimacy with him, for the same motives that persons said influenced his quest of other gentlemen connected with the press, *viz.*, *notoriety* in the papers. But here was evidence that the mysterious banker carried in his breast one of the noblest of all human impulses, gratitude.

Before entering the wing MacGregor said, "The man whose life I saved was by no means so old as you. Nor did he have white hair."

"I was disguised then, MacGregor. I am that man, rest assured, and before I left you, I asked for your name, which you gave me, and also the name of your paper. I said to you then, 'I will repay you for your courage some day.' Don't you remember those words? And don't you remember that you were anxious for me to enter a complaint against those wretches, and that I declined doing so, on the plea that I was in a hurry and could not spare the time."

"You most certainly are that man," said the editor, "or you would not know all the particulars."

"Come this way," said the master of Beverly, turning down a side hall of the wing, and pausing before an iron door, with

heavy lock, but painted white, with an altar in the centre covered with flowers running wild over it. It was an altar in ruins, but the gayly painted flowers of modern times almost concealed the ruin, so luxuriantly did they clamber over the stones.

"Study that picture, MacGregor, for it is the symbol of my life."

"And an exquisite idea it is too," was the response of the editor. "I see it at once. In youth we worship at the altar dedicated to the ideal. Years, with their burden of disappointments and cruelties, shatter the altar and it is abandoned. But to every life some flowers of love or friendship bloom late, and these become finally almost a covering for the cracked and moss-grown altar, which can never be restored. The ideal is hopelessly ruined, but the decline of life is solaced by the growth of beauty in the real. Any storm may sweep away the frail flowers, dependence cannot be had in them, but because we are so weary and lonely, we allow them to climb over the grand old altar, and thank God that even such transient and transparent mockeries can please the eye where the heart will no longer trust."

"Marvellous, MacGregor!" exclaimed the old man, steadily contemplating him. "In the perfection of your splendid manhood suffering has made you as old in your heart as poor old Dashwood, with his white hairs. Otherwise you could not have solved the device upon my door. Oh man! so proud, so beautiful, so gifted, you too have suffered the agony of the damned. Give me your hand once more. We shall be nearer to each other now. Yes," he continued, "we have both passed through sorrow blacker than the grave. The beautiful in us has fallen headlong upon its face. There it lies, the statue, and oh! it was so exquisite a model. Will, strong, god-like will, stands by us to the end, in its brazen armor; but faith, that most transcendently lovely flame, will never burn again within us. Enter now my sanctum. We both comprehend the meaning of flowers on a ruined altar. Let us cultivate the growth of the frail, evanescent flowers. They are all we shall ever have."

There was a deep pathos in the old man's tones as he concluded. His companion was silent in the reflection that two men of such different age comprehended so perfectly the whole mockery of life. He felt his heart warming towards the singular old being who held the keys of power, and yet was so sad at times in his aged loneliness. What could his history be? He was no Englishman surely. The guide in white and silver must have hit the truth. He must be of the neighborhood, and yet no one knew him. The editor had conversed with the country people for miles around concerning him. The county was wild with excitement over the expenditures and the eccentricities of the new-comer.


But the editor had little time for speculation now. A brass key was applied to the keyhole by Dashwood, the iron door swung back, and he gazed in wonder upon the apartments of his host: The first room was circular, and walled apparently with crimson velvet, upon which hung polished sabres and gold-mounted pistols, of every variety and calibre. The flash of polished steel and jewels was on every side, lighted as the apartment was by a great skylight. Upon a centre table, covered with a circular sheet of glistening steel, stood French jewel cases, which the master of Beverly opened and exhibited to his guest. In one of them were twenty gold rings, each with a single diamond, of which the largest was one and a half inches round, and the smallest a quarter of an inch. One was a large yellow diamond. In another jewel case two diamonds were placed as pendants at the end of a large necklace of pearls. There were two pearl necklaces, each pearl perfectly round and white, and as large as a pea. One pearl bracelet contained a central pearl the size of a cherry. Casket after casket was opened by the owner, and diamonds seemed to have literally been showered upon the strange man by some deity. Five sabres were then exhibited to the editor. All had the flat side of the scabbard richly enamelled in gold. One was a blaze of diamonds on the hilt and scabbard, another was rich in pearls, and another still had the sword-knot and tassels

made of pearls. One diamond was then taken from a case, which was as large as the celebrated "Derichnoir," or "Sea of Light." Among the treasures was an opal, of the size of a filbert, clasped in the claws of a golden eagle, wrought with wonderful art. It had such vivid and various colors that all the beauty of the heavens could be seen in it. Gem after gem was brought forth, until MacGregor was bewildered. The most exquisite work of the lapidary was visible upon some of the amethysts brought out for his inspection. One of these beautiful stones rivalled the one which contained the famous portrait intaglio of Sapor. It was of a rich, dark-purple lustre, and had carved upon it the likeness of Mr. Dashwood. Finally the banker exhibited a diamond as large as the well-known Koh-i-noor. It was shaped differently from that royal stone.

"This," he said, "I picked up myself in one of the diamond regions. I have spent a long life in study and research, and you see the result of travel. You keep close-mouthed regarding my banking business. That is all *bosh*. I made my wealth in the diamond fields, where genius and science must go, if they wish great results. But this stone is so like to the great Koh-i-noor, that I confess to the weakness of the old superstition regarding it. You are scholar enough to remember how many Eastern dynasties it ruined."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

*"What sublime madman reared this noble building to the clouds?"
Vauban's eulogy on the Bishop of Coutances.*

FTER the inspection of one of the richest treasuries of jewels he had ever read of (and his remarks satisfied the banker that he was conversant with the history of the principal repositories of gems in the world), MacGregor was conducted out of the circular room through

another door of iron, beautifully painted, and having in the centre an ideal painting of Croesus. As he heard this massive door close behind him, he turned, and beheld on the outside of the door, which was painted blue, with a border of pink roses, a painting of Somnus stretched upon a couch. The hand of Mr. Dashwood locked the door, and they found themselves in the private bedchamber of the banker. The walls were covered with Marie Stuart blue velvet. The ceiling was frescoed with a procession of water nymphs dressed in blue. The window-curtains were blue silk lined with white, and the under curtains were of the finest snowy lace. The carpet was light blue, with white lilies scattered upon it; and the mantel-piece was of carved ivory, and was decorated with a great mirror, framed in a polished frame of white, with a narrow inner frame of gold. Upon the mantel-piece stood marble miniatures of Nox and Eos, and between them a golden clock ticked away the hours. When the clock struck, a golden lark flew from the works, and alighted on the head of Time, a statuette of gold surmounting the elaborate timepiece. Between the great windows was the sumptuous couch of the banker, with its blue-silk and lace canopy, gathered in the hand of an angel of marble, which jutted far out from the wall. It was the angel of night flying, with a star upon her forehead. The half-opened canopy revealed the counterpane heavy with silk embroidery, and the fine linen of the pillow-cases edged with lace. No part of the bedstead was visible, so luxuriously did the coverings droop to the floor, a mass of linen, lace, and white silk. An ivory table at one side was covered with silver-mounted articles for a gentleman's toilet. The handles of everything were silver. Even the bands which held back the window-curtains were broad chains of pure silver. The elaborate bureau and the chairs were of varnished whitewood, inlaid with bands of chased silver, and covered with blue velvet. Oval frames of carved silver on the walls contained gracefully lined tropical birds in water colors.

"I have suffered all kinds of hardships in my eventful life,"

said Mr. Dashwood, "and I intend to take my comfort during the little time I have to stay. Just come to this window and look out." He drew aside the lace curtain and the editor beheld the great onward sweep of the Hudson below him, with all the witchery of its mountains, hills, woods, and cultivated estates.

"There is the Delancy estate," said the master of Beverly, pointing away to the broad acres of the old manor. "Do you not recognize the place? And there too is your own little home nestling in the foliage like a white dove. You will hardly know it from this room until your eyes become accustomed to the strange transformations due to this great altitude."

"I see the wood-crowned hill back of it and the creek which comes from the right. Otherwise I should not know it," said the editor. "There are two other places that resemble it from here. See! that one on the right. I do believe I should not have known my own unless you had pointed it out. But tell me. Do you know the Hartwell family who occupy the manor temporarily?"

"I have not been presented to them yet," said Mr. Dashwood. "I have been too busy with my workmen to devote much time to the people of the neighborhood. But this will all come in time. Now come into my bath-room."

He raised the blue curtain from an arch and admitted his guest to a saloon paved with pink marble veined with white, and with a reservoir of water in the centre shaped like a flat sea-shell. Gods and goddesses of the sea, chiselled from white marble, held their hands above the basin, and from their silver serpents, which they clasped about the middle, hot and cold water could at any moment be turned into the bathing tub. The windows were covered with pink-silk curtains, and from the sashes issued the melody of *Æolian* harps cunningly concealed. Divans were scattered about, and tiny tables of gold, with slender legs, on which fresh flowers were standing in vases of glass. A statue of *Hygeia* guarded the portal of entrance to the saloon on one side, while on the other stood *Cybele*, the

goddess of nature of the Lydians. Passing through this saloon Mr. Dashwood entered another, his private parlor, which was carpeted and curtained in shades of drab, with broad golden borders to carpet and curtains. The same extravagance of under curtains was visible here, too, ever-new styles of white lace adorning the windows. The furniture was of gold, of slender patterns, with the exception of two easy chairs with rests for the feet, in which one might read or sleep with ease. The paintings here were superb, nearly all of the Spanish school, and could not have been collected without travel, time, and culture. Above the mantel-piece, which was elaborately carved in oak, was a painting of an Italian spring-time, and beneath it MacGregor saw in the handwriting of the master of Beverly, on a card, these words from Shelley :

" 'Twas at the season when the earth upsprings
From slumber, as a sphered angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings."

Candlesticks of gold were on every side, with wax tapers, which was the only light the proprietor of the place would permit.

"Here is the sanctum, MacGregor," he said, "where you can always have access to me. Here will we laugh at care, and in friendship's converse find the sweetest joy of life. I will entertain all in the main palace, but here you alone shall enter and be trusted with the keys. You must study the paintings I have in the main palace, for they are genuine. I have there a Guido and a Vandyck. If I had enjoyed the leisure of George Vertue I should have rivalled his knowledge of art, for I love the history of painters, and have eagerly investigated every authority that fell in my way. But I will show you my private library and then dismiss you to your own suite of rooms beyond it. Enter this parlor from the library whenever you please. But I fear, when you realize the value and rarity of my collection of books, you will forget old Dashwood, and live in that realm of literature alone. I am proud of this library, and I

have been many years noting down these rare works, which I determined to own, whenever I gained the amount of wealth requisite to purchase them."

He then drew aside another curtain, and the two stood at the silent shrine, where the great worship. The room was carpeted and hung with purple velvet, the chairs were silver with purple seats, and the bookcases were ebony inlaid with silver rods. The white-marble busts of scholars and poets, on the tops of the bookcases, stood out clear and well defined from the background of purple velvet.

"Make this secluded spot your home whenever you choose to come, my dear MacGregor. Here are the keys that will give you exit from your suite of rooms beyond. I leave you now to yourself and to the books which, from my taste and fealty, I have enshrined in imperial purple. When you have inspected them pass on into your own rooms beyond. There you will find wine and refreshments, and your trunk, which arrived here before you. Farewell! Whenever you want me, notify this boy!"

He turned and pointed to a page arrayed in purple velvet, with a silver star upon his left breast. The boy bowed, and the master of Beverly withdrew with a smile upon his aged lips. The editor sank into one of the luxurious chairs, beside an ivory table covered with elegant writing materials, and looked about him. The boy withdrew to one side and dropped upon a cushion, where he had been seated when they entered. He was noiseless in his movements, being shod in velvet. The scholar's Elysium was perfect—books, and utter silence. It was evident that the master of Beverly had recently been occupied in study. Everything at one of the tables indicated this. Open tomes were scattered upon the table. A half-dozen volumes stood on end upon the floor for ready reference, and loose paper lay in half-written sheets upon the ivory. On one side of the library were arranged the works of the moderns in handsome bindings. Here MacGregor wandered along the cases, at length, and saw upon the books the familiar names of

poets, authors of fiction, and publicists. Here, too, were shelves devoted exclusively to works on mysticism. Among these he noted for future study books on the doctrines of the Soofees. Passing across the apartment, he inspected the shelves upon the opposite wall. They were covered with ancient and uncouth-looking volumes, bound in skeepskin or heavy dark leather, with brazen clasps. There was not a single book with an attractive modern binding; nothing to indicate an elegant collection of popular lore, but all suggesting antiquity of date and rarity of edition. They were venerable authorities from which moderns plunder, and palm off *excerpta* as original discoveries in science. Here were quaint old volumes that might have been issued to the world when Laurens Janszoon Coster first printed with his wooden type, deriving his inspiration beneath the tree of Haarlem. Here were Japanese and Tartar volumes, printed from wooden type, a thousand years before the European printer was born; precious, treasured relics of the early art, which the indomitable will of some traveller had wrested from the grasp of some nomadic *savant* in the desert of Gobi, or chattered for with some shrewd bibliopole of Miako. Upon a divan were lying open two rare volumes from the English plunder of the famous Mysore library, whose illuminated pages astonished the British Oriental scholars by the skill and beauty of their workmanship, which rivalled that of the monks who adorned the ancient missals of the Roman Catholic faith. The Northman and the Oriental had yielded up their national works at the touch of the talismanic gold of the master of Beverly. Here were the important old Slavic works—*Pravda Ruskaya* (Russian law), the satires of the poet-prince, Cantemir, the dramas of the great Kniazhnin, and the more modern Polevoy and Kukolnik, and Pogodin's critical works on the ancient history of Russia. The Uigur literature had not been overlooked, with its veins of Buddhist doctrine and literature traceable through its pages. Here, too, were representatives of the second era of Turkish literature, when their soldiers had overrun Persia, and the

knowledge and sentiment of that land had tinged the works of the Turkish poets and scholars. The biographies of Mir-Ali-Shah and the astronomical works of Ulugh Bey were on these shelves. The lights of the Osmanli or Western Turks were here : Sheikhi, the poet and physician, Neshimi, the freethinker, Meshihi, the renowned elegist, Mohammed Effendi, the historian, the annalists, Saad-ed-Deen, Izzi, and Vasif, and Baki, the prince of lyric poets.

Weary at length with his preliminary examination of the literary treasures, to which he determined to return often during his summer idling in the country, the editor was about to pass on into his own suite of rooms, when his attention was attracted by a large blank-book upon one of the tables. He found it lettered on the back with the words, "Note-Book of Pamphila." He knew at once that it was one of the eccentricities of Mr. Dashwood. The Note-book of Pamphila was said by the ancients to contain everything worthy to be remembered. The editor smiled at the conceit ; and then opening the volume, found that it was a compilation of newspaper items concerning matters of rare interest in every department of science and gossip. The items had been pasted in the book, and covered by their dates a period of sixty years. In the chirography of Mr. Dashwood appeared these lines : "I have saved and pasted in this book these items, as they appeared from week to week. Let some future historian frankly acknowledge in his book his indebtedness to the aged master of Beverly."

"Ah !" exclaimed the editor, as he saw that the items had been principally cut from American papers. "Here is a strong indication that Mr. Dashwood, if not an American, has passed nearly all these sixty years here. Who can he really be ? His indorsement by an English noble is beyond dispute. So cultured, so mysterious, who is this singular old man ?"

The editor passed on thoughtfully into his own rooms. The first curtain (purple) he drew back. A second curtain of golden satin revealed itself. Drawing this too aside he found him-

self in a vaulted room. The ceiling was intended to recall the "Legend of Mahomet." The sky was of flashing silver, from which stars were suspended by chains of gold. The walls were hung with scarlet velvet. The windows were curtained with white silk, dotted with silver stars, and looped back with silver cord. The floor was of cream-colored marble, and in the centre of it knelt four angels, guarding a couch whose corners they supported upon their outstretched arms. The features of these white-marble guardians were exquisitely beautiful. No canopy was above the bed, save only the canopy of the starry sky. A cream-colored satin coverlet with a border of white velvet leaves covered the bed, and fell to the floor. The soft linen of the pillow-cases had a broad fringe of lace, and beside the bed, on a slender golden chair, lay folded a quilt of swan's down lined with white silk. On the opposite side from the chair stood a slender golden tripod, upon which were three miniature graces, each holding a scarlet wax taper, that the occupant of the bed might read upon wakeful nights.

The bureau was of gold, and over it was a canopy of white silk and lace, concealing the frame of the mirror. Upon a divan of cream-colored silk lay folded a dressing-gown of white silk, with scarlet silk collar and cuffs. In each corner of the collar an ivy leaf was embroidered in gold. Around the scarlet cuffs ran a slender gold ivy vine. The cord and tassels for the waist were of gold. Scarlet velvet slippers, embroidered in gold, lay upon the dressing-gown, and upon it was a note also written by Dashwood, requesting the editor to accept the gown and slippers as a token of regard from himself.

Passing under the next arch, MacGregor held back the curtain, and found before him an octagonal apartment, walled entirely with mirrors, set in slender Corinthian columns of green marble, with base and capitals of gold. The floor was marble, of alternate squares of green and white, and in the centre was a golden bowl, with water nymphs in *bas-relief*. This was the bathing tub, which was supplied with hot and cold

water from the painted ceiling above, where a group of golden water spirits were ever ready to pour down their contributions to the bather, by means of two slender chains of gold, with rings at the ends which hung low above the bowl. The apartment was lighted from above. Around the apartment stood statues of white marble of the classical goddesses of the waters and woods. In slender chariots of green marble around the bathing bowl sat sylvan spirits of white, with their extended arms full of the finest towelling for the bather, or offering golden cups of perfumed soaps.

With eager curiosity the favored guest of Beverly passed on into the last room of his suite. The green-velvet curtain was pushed aside from the arch, the inner curtain was passed, and he entered his private parlor. It was a sumptuous room, decorated in colors of salmon and blue, with elaborate golden cornices over windows and doors, and opening upon a balcony whence he could overlook a magnificent range of river and mountain scenery. Every appliance of ease and repose in furniture had been resorted to, to secure the *littérateur's* comfort, and glancing at the walls he saw they were covered with paintings, whose beauties would reveal new phases by daily study. The furniture was covered with the most exquisite needle-work in silk and floss. Arachne had surely been resurrected by this modern master of effect. Her needle alone could have wrought such marvels of grace. Statuettes, bronzes, cabinets of rare shells, and curiosities from every land, were gathered here. He recognized upon the walls a portrait by Velasquez, fruit and game pieces by Sneyder, a forest scene by Ruysdael, a sacred painting by Rehasa, a spiritual head by Murillo. There were painting of fair white dryads among the trees, naiads bending pensively over springs, and elves dancing upon buttercups and daisies.

After a careful inspection of this luxurious room, he turned to the table, upon which the most delicious lunch had been spread for him. He sat there enjoying the viands and the wines which had been brought to him on salvers of gold, and in glass

of most delicate structure and finish, until the thought occurred to him that he would examine the outlet of these rooms. He accordingly placed his keys in the elegantly painted iron door, which was partly hidden by curtains, turned back the heavy slides, opened the door, and found himself at the end of a long colonnade of ethereal elegance, running along the rear of the palace. From this gallery had the guests of the house first witnessed his advent to the valley. He saw now, far away below him, the white-marble temple from which his eyes first rested upon the surpassing loveliness of Beverly. The whole view was enchanting, and as he gazed upon its details and recognized so many familiar objects far below, a feeling of exaltation of spirit came over him, to which he had been a stranger for many a day. He realized then the great gifts of appreciation with which God had endowed Dashwood, and the wonderful executive power of the strange old man to grasp at the effects of noble scenery, and make them subservient to his artistic plans.

CHAPTER XXIX.

*"And over all there moves
The phantasm of my life. With joy and dread
I see it passing, and my memory proves
Its truth to nature."* *Sallie M. Bryan.*



REAMS of imagination are the atonement for the miseries of reality, my dear MacGregor."

Thus spoke the master of Beverly on the evening of the day the editor first looked upon the wonders of the palace. The wax candles illumined the library with their soft light, as the two friends sat alone in conversation on either side of a table, which was strewn with the books they had been consulting in support of their diverse theories.

"Yes," he continued, "you have hugged the popular delusion to yourself because it was a solace, just as men employ

hurtful narcotics to gain temporary relief from pain. But in the depth of your fine intellect you know that no solid foundation for a belief in the popular hereafter exists. The eternity of matter is obvious to the senses, but that spirit exists as a separate and isolated object from matter, or that it can so exist, is a delusion. You claim for yourself a soul which can exist independent of the body, and you cite acts of intelligence as evidence that such soul does exist. But when I present you with positive proof of the intelligent acts of my dog, you say nay, that is instinct, not soul."

"I rely," was the response, "less upon my own reasoning powers than upon the positive revelations of God, confirmed as truth by His miracles. I admit that processes of reasoning lead the strongest intellects into absolute contradictions. Hence, reason is a fallible guide in ascertaining truth. But while in the labyrinths of reasoning we run hither and thither, the Divine Ruler interferes, and gives us positive proof of the hereafter of the soul, by manifestations of supernatural power. He first works marvels to prove His Godship, and then teaches by authority of that Godship the future and isolated existence of the soul. The miracles confound philosophy. I do not see how you can ignore their pertinency."

"They would be conclusive arguments, my dear MacGregor," was the response of the old man, as he fixed his penetrating dark eyes upon the editor, "if they really had occurred. But they never did, and they never could occur except as developments of law. I care not for the attestation of witnesses to a supernatural manifestation. Law is imperfectly known. Law works often in our own experience with wonderful regularity, and then comes some result directly contradictory or unlike the chain of uniform results. Scientific men of cool judgments do not jump instantly at the conclusion that the supernatural has intervened, but they rather investigate deeper to see if there is not some contingent cause operating still as a law, or as an additional law which has occasioned the unusual result. No, my dear sir, rest assured that evidence added to evidence does not

establish a miracle, which is a violation of law, but only shows that a result has happened attributable to laws not known or imperfectly known to the witnesses. One hundred years ago, with the sole knowledge of the telegraph in my breast, I could have proclaimed myself the Son of God, and pointed to my power to send messages with supernatural rapidity to the ends of the earth as evidence of my authority as a divine teacher. What miracle like it had occurred before? Do not hug the delusion to yourself of the miracles. No occurrence can ever be visible to men unless it is the result of law, well understood or misunderstood. And if the result of law, why bring in the name of a Deity. Why, even the great theologian, St. Augustine, declares that a miracle occurred not against nature but against what we know of nature."

"What then do you hold, Mr. Dashwood, to be the motive power that originated and moves the world?"

"Natural laws," was the response.

"And who made them?"

"They are self-existent, MacGregor."

The editor paused a moment. Then he said :

"Is this the true definition of law? Listen. 'Law is a rule of action prescribed by a superior, and which an inferior is bound to obey.'"

"No, I do not recognize that definition of law," said Mr. Dashwood. "That is a definition originating among men for the guidance of the state. But nature was before the state. Law for it means only the relation one atom of matter has to another, and the action of matter upon matter under varieties of circumstances. Matter operating in a certain way *must* produce a certain result. That necessity of result is the law of matter. If that result might be altered by the interposition of spirit power (a mere myth) then the necessity of result would not exist. Consequently there would be no law of matter. When you ask me to believe in a spirit, called God, which has the power to alter that which is unalterable, to make that result *unnecessary* which is necessary, in other words, to set aside

that which cannot from its nature be set aside, you confound me by a contradiction of terms."

"But," pleaded MacGregor, "our basis of belief is that an omnipotent being makes a law which he alone can revoke. He delegates to the atoms of matter a portion only of his own power which is revocable."

"Then he does not establish the laws of matter. For laws of matter are of necessity, irrevocable necessity. The instant that necessity does not attach, the idea of a natural law falls to the ground. The result must follow. No extraneous God can prevent it. And all the scientific men I ever heard of admit the universality of law. Every result must be produced by law. Therefore where is the use of any God at all? He cannot dissolve the immutable laws of nature. My body must decay and become the mould from which new objects shall germinate and take its place. This is the immutable law of my body, and the chemicals of the ground with which it blends upon decay."

The aged man spoke with powerful emphasis. His bright eyes directed across the table at his companion; his arm, clothed in the sleeve of his blue velvet dressing-gown, rising and falling as he struck with his closed fist upon the table to add force to his words, or as he waved his open palm away from him.

"No, my dear MacGregor," he added. "These ideas of disembodied spirits enjoying an Elysium in ether, and freed from the laws of matter, to which they have been attached from the instant of their creation (if they ever were created), are dreams of the imagination to solace us for the anxieties and pains we suffer."

"And have you been so conversant, Mr. Dashwood, with the wonders of modern Spiritualism, and yet can see no finger of God in it pointing out the immortality of the soul?"

"I have witnessed all the marvels of the Spiritualists, MacGregor, and yet to me they are only manifestations of natural laws unknown as yet or imperfectly comprehended. I only

wondered at them, and could not understand them ; just as the Italians wondered at the visions of the Fata Morgana, until science at length made them all clear and traceable to natural laws. No, my dear fellow, you are too strong in mind, too logical, too brilliant to be captivated by superstitions. Adhere to your career of study and investigation. Probe every theory. Fear not to study every subject *pro* and *con*, and above all dive to the bottom of all religions, for upon them so much of the *arcana imperii* over human hearts have depended and will depend. Never take from enemies of a religion statements as to its dogmas, but consult in person its highest authorities. There are sincere, thoughtful, earnest men in all religions. These are all striving by dreams of imagination to atone for the miseries of reality. We are buffeted in this life, some of us cruelly : the sweetest, the purest, the noblest in us is ever the signal by which men and women know where to torture us. When the demon is uppermost in us we have marvellous success. When we would live by the straight, gentle line laid down by a good mother's counsel, how like devils events and people combine to rend our hearts with keenest agony. I do not wonder then that men look away to the stars, and dream of a better land where the real motives of our hearts shall be appreciated, where the tenderest of our affections shall meet with a perfect response. Oh ! is there a greater hell than to labor and sacrifice for others, and then have all our earnest efforts unappreciated and even misrepresented, to have the fine gold called dross, and the crystal water of our hearts styled pollution ? Would that I had been born like most men, that poetry, and music, and heroism, and sacrifice for loved ones and for country had been to my youthful heart but the imaginings of a lunatic's brain. Would that I could calmly see the gifted suffer, and sneer at the trembling child begging on the street, and turn away to lick the feet of affluence. But it is not in me, and I have been made to suffer for the possession of tenderness and appreciation. No ; it is no wonder that ancient and modern eyes where brilliancy reigned have looked

towards the heavens for relief, for hope, when the thorns pressed so keenly upon the heart, and the brain throbbed with its own peculiar agony."

"As for me," said the editor, "I do look to the heavens for relief, and shall look there until the sods cover me. Did I not believe in God I should long ago have taken my own life. Any man who feels the burden of life press upon him to the extent of actual agony is a fool not to rid himself of life when eternal rest and annihilation come from the leap into the dark. Did I hold your belief, I would have made my exit long ago, and gladly, too. I have been deserted and betrayed by one who should have stood by me if all the world forsook me. The whole dream of my life has been blasted. Why should I live with this gnawing agony ever at my heart, if one leap into the dark would hush all the tumult, and give me eternal peace. Dashwood, I envy you your belief, for with it I would be this very hour at peace."

"Another true man deserted and betrayed!" exclaimed the banker, watching with admiration the eloquent play of the eyes of MacGregor while he was speaking. "Another heart murder! Well, we are brothers in suffering, and it is sweet to think that what we lay open to each other will find sympathy. Now I want to speak to you upon the subject which is near my heart. It was for this I sent for you."

"Go on," said the editor. "I am too young to give you advice, but not too young, probably, to assist you."

"No, you are not too young to assist me. Indeed, I believe you can aid me better than any living man."

As he spoke, the old man arose from his chair and went to a drawer, from which he produced a letter, and handing it to his companion, walked slowly up and down the room with his hands behind his back, while the editor perused it. The old man kept his eyes upon the face of the reader and saw that he was agitated. MacGregor was reading the handwriting of the beautiful woman from whose presence he had fled away. It was the note Marie Delancy had written to the banker, de-

clining his offer of pecuniary assistance on condition of her avoiding the stage. When he had finished the reading of the note, the editor looked up as if for further information. Then the banker said :

"The pecuniary assistance which she declines was an offer I made to her to pay her exactly what Matzek had stipulated to pay her. I offered her this if she would keep off the stage."

"Your kindness is very great, Mr. Dashwood ; but had you made her acquaintance ?"

"I never was presented to her," said the banker.

"That of itself would make a high-spirited girl decline your offer," said the editor.

"I know all that, MacGregor. But I really wanted to save her from the stage, and as I was such an old man, I thought, perhaps, she would not feel herself compromised in any way, and would gladly seize the opportunity to avoid painful publicity."

"She comes of a very old and a very haughty stock, Mr. Dashwood."

"I know that, I know that," said the old man thoughtfully, and again he commenced a walk up and down the room. Pausing at length before his companion, he said :

"Tell me how I can keep that girl off the stage. If you can assist me in this matter I shall feel under eternal obligations to you."

"I cannot conceive, Mr. Dashwood, why you should manifest such anxiety on the subject. You are not acquainted with her."

"True, true," he said, abstractedly, and then turned away again, resuming his walk. After a while he said :

"Miss Delancy comes of an aristocratic stock. Naturally it will be mortifying for her to be discussed by the public at the footlights. Her family will feel annoyed also. Do you not believe in a disinterested act of kindness ? I am an old man, and rich. I see this poor young lady under a sense of duty

sacrificing her pride, and becoming the property of the public. Without inconvenience to myself I can help her. I hear all the people in the circle of society in which her family moved, saying, 'What a pity! What a shame!' I can remedy the matter, and she won't allow me."

"Your kindness is great, and is born of a noble heart, Mr. Dashwood. Her pride of character is great also; and you can plainly see that it is greater than her pride of family. She will be the first in a long line of Delancys that ever accepted an occupation which was tinged with reproach. I admire her nerve, and you must respect her more than you would if she had accepted your offer."

"Of course I do, of course I do!" exclaimed Mr. Dashwood, vehemently. "Confound it! that is the very reason I want to keep her off the stage now. The very traits she has manifested make me value her higher. And I know that the higher her character, the more real pain will she experience in secret at becoming a public character to be criticised by every popinjay. But can't you help me, MacGregor? Can't you influence her? You have told me that you boarded in the same house with her, and esteemed her very highly."

"No, I cannot influence her to give up a means of support which she has found for herself and her grandmother. I would not undertake to do it, anyway. But if you persist in your purpose to save this stranger from the stage, of course it can be done. The power of money is immense. You have not taken the right way to approach her. It would have been just the same if you had known her. I know her well, and she regards me rather as a benefactor. But I could not approach her with money; she is too proud. Now I have never used money to accomplish any strategic purpose; but I assure you, in her behalf, so much do I esteem her, I would use money, and use it in such a covert way, that the purpose would be effected, and she never know it."

"Bless you, bless you, my dear, noble MacGregor," said the old man with intense emotion, the tears filling his eyes. "Two

heads are better than one. I knew if I summoned you, her friend, some way would be found to thwart her purpose. By heavens! if you will help me to drive her from the stage there is no favor you will be refused at my hands."

"It is not to secure your favor, Mr. Dashwood, but my regard for her, that prompts any action I may take."

"I do not doubt it. She is a grand girl. But now command my purse for any amount necessary to effect this result."

The editor sat for a moment in reflection. He was calculating the amount of property that would comfortably maintain Marie and her grandmother in the country. Then he said:

"The amount is large. But you seem determined as a lion to carry out whatever purpose has entered your head. I know that with fifty thousand dollars in my hands I can break up this determination of Miss Delancy."

"Why, my dear fellow, that is nothing at all. What is fifty thousand dollars to me? Here, I will draw a check for the amount now, and for Heaven's sake expedite the matter."

He approached his writing-desk; took out his check-book, and made out a check for fifty thousand dollars, payable to the order of MacGregor. He could not conceal his delight at the result of the interview. He intrusted the money to the editor without the slightest effort to ascertain how he was about to use it. The result was the grand idea. He cared nothing for the expense or the manner of procedure, so that Miss Delancy remained away from public notoriety. When the check was in the hand of MacGregor, the old man seemed to be full of exultation. He walked up and down, rubbing his aged hands together in glee, and saying: "This result is splendid, perfectly splendid. This is the best day's work I ever did in my life. The proud creature, proud as Lucifer, and yet with not a penny of her own. She wouldn't come down from her high perch for all of old Dashwood's money, eh! When money sent straight fails, then send it roundabout. That's the way, my boy. The filthy lucre is your true thaumaturgist, after

all. It makes stiff necks bend, and softens even adamantine wills."

"I don't believe it would soften your will, Mr. Dashwood," interposed the editor.

"There you are right," exclaimed the old banker, pausing before him with a bright gleam in his eyes. "If there is one thing upon which I ever did pride myself, it is my infernal will. I wouldn't give two snaps of my finger for the man who would abandon a purpose which once he had deliberately formed. I never yield to circumstances so far as the ultimate purpose is concerned. Men may think I have abandoned the purpose because I lie so still and patient under obstacles, but by heavens! the moment comes when I leap up from the ruins of attempts, and stride to my goal. I never failed, MacGregor, in the long run. I never will. Listen to me, for inasmuch as you will have always hereafter the keys to my inner life, it is proper that you should not see your friend under false colors. I will expose to you what I am when thwarted. You have detected some secret and delicate way to make this proud, poor girl relinquish her hold upon the stage. I am content, so that my will in the matter is accomplished. I have your word, and that is equivalent to your oath. Now let me tell you what I would have done if Miss Delancy could not have been stopped in any other way. I would have bought Matzek to quarrel with her and break up the contract with her, and if she still succeeded in any other way in getting upon the stage, I would have had her hissed down by hundreds of people who had been bought by my money. I would have caused such an uproar in the Academy of Music as had never been witnessed there since its foundation. And the same result would have been manifested on every succeeding night that she had attempted to sing. I would have put millions, yes, millions of dollars into the hands of the populace to go in there and hiss her down. Believe me, I always have my will in the end. Had it been otherwise, Old Dashwood would not have been the master of Beverly, and scattering money by millions."

CHAPTER XXX.

*"My particular grief
Is of so flood-gate and d'erbearing nature,
That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows."*

Othello.

IN all the radiance of his matured beauty the editor sat alone and serious in his parlor of salmon and blue. He had been born for gallantry and magnificence. Had fate not laid upon his sensitive nature so heavy a burden of grief, he would have revelled in the luxury which surrounded him. He would have enjoyed the society of the lovely dames who had congregated at Beverly, and been the gayest of the gay. All eyes were directed to him, for, in addition to his beauty and fame, he was known to be peculiarly the favorite of the great wizard who had intoxicated the hearts of the *élite* by his extravagance and his generous hospitality. No combination of circumstances could have made MacGregor a sensualist. By the side of the fountain of his heart sat two guardians—the memory of his mother and the poetic idealism born in him. So perfect were these custodians that the fountain could never become seriously polluted by the contact with modern fashionable society. His heart would appropriate all the artistic, the harmonious, the beautiful, the soothing, that wealthy and aristocratic life brings, and reject the impure and the pernicious. Until the great, crushing agony came, which wiped out his dream of domestic bliss, his trust in God had been a potent auxiliary to the preservation of the purity innate to him. Stung by a sense of the injustice of his fate, the earnest-hearted scholar had for a time mocked bitterly at the idea of Divine justice. But that was only the excess of blinding agony. The skies were clearing, and again God's authority was receiving recognition.

But the iron which had once entered his soul had not been extracted. Its point remained there yet, and in the midst of the gay and the gifted would suddenly recur the agonizing

thought: "I once had a sweet home and wife and child. Where are they now? I so true, so earnest to her, have been betrayed where my very life centred." And thus the gifted man, so captivating in discourse, so polished in his wit, so gallant in his manner, wandered from group to group of the beautiful, like a god pierced with a dart. Women, by instinct, recognized in him delicacy, refinement, and purity, by the side of intellectual power and artistic appreciation. Some employed every art to fascinate him for the sake of the *éclat* of the conquest. Others secretly yearned for the warmth, the intensity, and the fidelity which would envelop the heart that gained the place of honor next his own. But ever affable, ever eloquent, ever considerate, he still seemed invulnerable. His intellectuality and taste were ever approachable. His heart seemed to elude the grasp of everyone. The badinage of love was always at his command, and he could entertain by the hour the coxcomb or the *savant*, the poet or the maid, but soft glances into his eyes never brought response. He was too earnest a soul to raise expectations of tenderness where he could not really yield it. So the fair women who revelled at Beverly were fascinated, but could not conquer. Taking full advantage of the privileges of the palace, he remained isolated in his rooms, studying and eating there when he liked, or coming out to participate in the common revelry or recreations of the great estate. Whenever he did make his appearance he was the leader in every adventure, every picnic, every ball that occurred upon the place. He was as truly a born leader in the art of elegant or manly recreation as he was in the arena of intellect. These combined attractions made him a universal favorite, and confirmed the opinion of the master of Beverly that he had made a wise selection of a bosom friend. He was in fact clothed with all those graces of person and mind which, the world over, cause a man to be styled "a perfect prince," an embodiment of human perfection, a title as proper for a superior man as "a perfect gentleman" is for the perfectly developed representative of that class.

But MacGregor was alone now, in his private parlor, brooding over his wrongs. The memory of them would return despite his will and his resolutions. Not but that the memory was blunted. The lovely Marie, and the possibility of winning her some day, had at times made him forget the blighted home. But old agonies are wonderfully tenacious of life. When we fancy them utterly annihilated, they spring up in the silence of reverie and confront us with their hideous forms. Often, in the noon-time of existence, when years have obliterated the faces of the loved and the lost, and we think of them only as of some hazy beings without defined outlines, a sudden and startling revelation of them comes, and we behold them as they were, essential to our happiness, and clothed in all the radiance which youth casts upon its idols. The gentle mother comes from the borders of eternity to gaze upon us with her loving eyes, as in the dear old days. The venerable and faithful old father puts aside the veil behind which he disappeared, and looks tenderly as of yore. The wife, who has known all the inner life of the man, as no other can ever know it, stands once more in her royal place, in the sanctuary of home, and the child, with her innocent and loving face, enters with pattering feet. All whom MacGregor had ever loved, he had loved deeply. All who had been dear to him had been very dear. When the woman he trusted had fled from him, she had perpetrated a crime of which her shallow heart could not have appreciated the full enormity. She had fled from one who idealized the names of wife and home. She had robbed the innermost sanctuary of the man who valued love and trust above all empires. Had he been as most men, he would have thought of substitutes and remedies. But, valuing love as the highest good of earth, his impulse was to murder the traitoress. She had committed what to him was the greatest crime conceivable, murder of the heart. Believing that by the ordination of God man and wife are one person (and this error had been woven into his very being by religious teachers), he deemed desertion to be the act of a demon, a creature unworthy of life. But when religion, which had raised

this delusion, did not send her back; when religious teachers did not urge her to return; when he found that she could receive holy communion in the churches, then his logic, the in-born protector of a great soul, came to his relief. The teachers then did not believe what they taught. What God had joined together might be put asunder. The church acquiesced. Hence the church was no longer a true, but a changeable guide. By the agony thus of his true heart did MacGregor arrive at length at the threshold of spiritual freedom which lies always at the point where men ignore churches, and look straight into the face of God, and of His Christ. Then slowly did he realize the splendor of God, and as the horror of the murder he had contemplated came at length to him, he prayed for pardon.

These thoughts came to him in his luxurious retreat. He forgave the woman, as he sat there meditating upon the teachings of Christ. The instant he ignored all churches he began to love. The moment the gentle teacher of Galilee came to him untrammelled by churches, he recognized the splendor of redemption. The church sheltered the woman who had violated what they taught was the immutable law of God. At this sight fealty to church was superseded by allegiance to Deity. From that day he became the brother of all men. He forgave the woman, but from that day he desired never to put eyes upon her again. She had lost the priceless, the love of a true heart. The door of the heart was closed. She could enter the sanctuary no more.

As he sat there so silent and thoughtful again the face peeped in which had often before looked in upon his solitude. He had fled from that face forever. But it haunted him. Whenever it came, a light, a glory seemed to illumine his being. A thrill passed over him as when some lovely creation of his imagination stirred his blood, as when the imagery of some poet exalted him to the ideal realms, as when some lovely landscape slumbered beneath him. He whispered, then, a name to God, looking out upon the sky, and he questioned the Deity as to the extent to which he might justly and honorably cherish that name

in his thoughts. He knew that the state would never allow him to link that name with his. Hence he had fled from her. But no edict of man or statute of Heaven seemed to forbid him to associate that name with the prayers he lifted to the skies for a glorious immortality. He prayed for the generous gifts of health and happiness on earth for her who had stolen so unexpectedly into his inner life. He solicited for her the beatitude of Heaven. Lonely must he be ever, but over him must travel to his grave a single star, luminous as the celestial guide which brought the magi to Bethlehem. Never again would utter blackness enshroud him. The star, though far away, had become a light to him. It was not a lamp of his own seeking or of his own creation. God must have sent the star. He would follow it then afar off until it was blended with the glory of immortality. Long, long did he sit with folded hands in reverie, and he noticed not that the day was faded. He was afar off with her in thought, the queenly star of his soul's night. And then the skies darkened so suddenly that he arose and looked forth in surprise, and saw that the evening star had arisen and the night was holy.

The calm of the evening was sweet to him, and doubtless its influence was upon all the inmates of the palace, for utter silence reigned in balcony and gallery. It was an exquisite hour at Beverly when the sun went down and the starry hosts of heaven were marshalling. So exalted was the mountain above the surrounding country, that the effects of the sunset were finer and more varied than elsewhere. When the Hudson had lost the wondrous coloring of the western skies, and was grown sombre in the evening shades, when the inhabitants of the river towns were hastening towards their houses, now obscure in the depths of the low country, Beverly was still glorified from the west. The departing king of day gave it the last smile. Then darkness fell fast, and the gay groups on the galleries and the piazza, or the sweet faces at the windows, saw lights twinkling in the villages below, or caught glimpses of the bolder lamps lighted as beacons for the river craft, or watched

the route of some steamer, recognizable only by the shower of sparks it left behind. Then, when the faces of the beautiful grew serious in the suggestions of the night, the stars opened their lovely eyes, and guitars began to *thrum* upon the galleries, for the wizard of the place bade his musical guests bring to his country home those auxiliaries of pleasure which made their own homes beautiful.

Far away as was the wing from the quarter of the palace where most of the guests were wont to gather in the evening, MacGregor could, nevertheless, catch wandering witch notes of the gentle music when the breeze freshened. He knew happy hearts were congregated on the piazza in groups, and, doubtless, whispering love, or speculating upon what novelty the master of Beverly would next surprise them with. At last there seemed to come a lull, the hush which usually preceded the illumination of Beverly, which occurred at a particular hour of the evening, when the whole palace seemed to spring up in golden fire, the marvel of the country for miles around. For this marvellous spectacle the ladies and gentlemen were accustomed to assemble on the piazza in full evening dress, for it was the signal for high revelry. In one instant the dark groups would become startlingly splendid in their evening costumes, sparkling with jewels, as the great structure sprang into brilliancy. The moment was near at hand, and silence was waiting for the flash of fires. The editor leaned upon his balcony and looked out upon the single star of the evening. The silence was profound. The chirping of the crickets and the occasional hum of a night beetle were the only sounds. The evening star grew more lustrous in its liquid light, and the solitary man lingered away from the gay throng yet a moment longer. Hush! beating heart! Is that music not startlingly near to the wing? And is that touch of the grand piano not marvellously fine? It is not the production of one of the great masters of song. It is a simple hymn, and words will surely follow upon such sweet, gentle notes. Yes, the human melody has chimed in with the instrument, and she is singing

the song of a pure heart yearning for heaven. How blessed and beautiful are the words winging their way up to the Celestial City! Yes, there *is* a better land, and a better life. The solitary watcher felt his whole being tremble and exult in the theme the girl was singing. She was a true church-woman, doubtless, who had brought her God, and her prayer-book, and her celestial hopes to Beverly. How powerfully, how sweetly she sings in the hushed evening, and the words are—

- "Jerusalem, my happy home!
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?"
- "Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamond-square,
Thy gates are all of orient pearl:
O God! if I were there!"
- "O my sweet home, Jerusalem!
Thy joys when shall I see?
The King that sitteth on thy throne
In His felicity!"
- "Thy gardens and thy goodly walks
Continually are green,
Where grow such sweet and pleasant flowers
As nowhere else are seen.
- "Right through thy streets, with pleasing sound,
The living waters flow,
And on the banks on either side
The trees of life do grow.
- "Those trees each month yield ripened fruit:
Forevermore they spring,
And all the nations of the earth
To thee their honors bring.
- "Oh! mother dear, Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joys when shall I see?"

The music ceased, and all was still again. Then a groan seemed to come from an inner room. The editor in surprise passed across his parlor, drew aside the curtain from the arch, and entered the octagonal bathing-room, which was lighted from above. The skylights were open to admit the fresh air, and a

solitary wax candle dimly lighted up the groups of statuary. Against one of the white marbles leaned a gentleman in full evening dress, with his head bowed upon his arm. Over the dark coat-collar wandered long white hair. It was the wizard of Beverly, the old man, whose whole energies seemed now to be centred upon one object, the happiness of his guests. The footfall of the editor was muffled by his velvet slippers, so that Mr. Dashwood started when a friendly hand was laid upon him, and a kind voice said :

"You are ill, my good friend. I heard your groan and hastened to you."

"Ah ! it is you, MacGregor. No, I am not ill. But did you hear that heavenly music ?"

"Yes, indeed, and I recognized the voice. But you told me, Mr. Dashwood, that you had not been presented to that young lady. Therefore I wondered greatly to find her a guest here."

"I told you the truth, my dear friend. I have not been presented to her, and she has just arrived. She has a great aunt, who, long ago, was a dear friend of mine, Mrs. DeLord. I felt that old associations demanded that the old lady should receive courtesies at my hands. Therefore I invited her to join our merry crowd, and tendered her the suite of rooms next to the private wing. I desired her to bring Miss Delancy with her if she would accept the invitation. That heavenly song tells me that the girl has come. I shall be presented to her by her aunt to-night. But did you hear it, wandering away up near to those stars ? Oh God ! did you hear it, that song of the myth, that song of the beautiful land ?"

The old man seemed to be unnerved.

"No myth, my dear Dashwood," said the editor, "but a sublime and beautiful truth."

"No. It is the spell of the sorceress, Music," murmured the banker. "She is so potent that she bends stubborn knees in prayer when the intellect revolts. She spurs Christian people to forget the lamb in their faith and become the demons of the battle-field. Oh Music ! so potent for good or for evil. Whence

came you, Sorceress, to say to the human will, melt and be weak. But did you hear it, MacGregor? It stole away upon the gentle wings of the summer wind so sweetly, and yet so powerfully, and so upward in its flight, that it seemed not to pause until it reached its congenial sphere at the starry gates of the great myth. Listen. I am greatly moved by this girl's melody. And let me tell you, in confidence, mind you, that I once **knew** her mother. She sang like this girl, a wonderful voice. And I knew it at once. Strange, was it not? so like the mother that I fancied the lovely woman had burst the frost of death, and had come to sing to me again of that land of which she was ever talking. It must be her child in there. Oh! MacGregor, I am unclasping to you the brazen links of an old heart. I am making demands upon your friendship. Help an old man, a lonely old man, to bear the burden of the past. That child's mother was so lovely in her character and life, so without the stains of selfishness and greed, that she almost made me accept the myth of a land where such as she are poised on angel-wings. The voice, oh! the exquisite voice, in harmony with the exquisite and pure heart, how I loved it. And now this girl has come, doubtless, with traces of the same beauty and loveliness in her to touch my old heart again. Do you wonder that I make nothing of the money that will buy her away from the public stage? Do you wonder that a rich old man is almost frantic in his devilish will to keep her daughter, the angel-woman's daughter, away from gaping crowds and vulgar criticism? No, no, you understand me now, MacGregor. Use that money I have given you to find this child a quiet home. Yes, call upon me for double the amount and it is yours."

The old man paused a moment, so violent was his agitation. Then raising both arms to the sky, which was now beginning to glisten with many stars, he said, with an intensity and firmness which was startling in its evidence of character :

"By heavens! Before Marie Delancy shall sing in public I will, with these aged hands, *fire* the Academy."

CHAPTER XXXI.

*"Whose soups and sauces, duly seasoned,
Whose wit well-timed, and sense well-reasoned,
Give Burgundy a brighter stain,
And add new flavor to Champagne."*



ACGREGOR dressed for the ball that night with unusual care. Fate had again thrown Miss Delancy in his way. He had acted honorably in avoiding her in the boarding-house, where they could not fail to meet often, and at imminent peril to the reputation of both. If now another meeting had been planned for them in an unexpected locality by that Providence who, it is claimed, directs all the accidents of life, he had only to act as becomes a gentleman and a guest, and allow no greater intimacy to spring up than common courtesy demands from guests under the same roof. But how to meet her and be self-possessed, after the revelations of his parting letter, was not so easy to determine. Embarrassment might ensue. Perhaps his communication had offended her, or his tardy revelation of his matrimonial fetters had carried with it to her mind the taint of dishonorable concealment. But conscious of his own integrity in the matter he resolved to face all reproaches she might allow to escape her, and bear the burden of being misunderstood, if so it must be. He could not restrain, however, a certain feeling of delight that he was so soon to meet face to face the lovely girl, the patrician under a cloud. Time had been quietly settling deeper and firmer the roots of his attachment for her. Distance had only intensified his love for her. Struggle as he might with the amorous god, the arrow had penetrated deep, and though honor, religion, and common sense tugged hard to draw out the barb, it clung there in the very heart-strings. He could not have been mortal and yet have been devoid of curiosity to know if his disclosure had awakened any shade of gentle response in the fair, gifted maid.

When he entered the brilliantly lighted dancing-hall, with its

hundreds of wax-lights, its display of fresh flowers, its superb bands of music, one at each end under the silver trees, and its groups of beautiful women and elegant men, he recognized it as one of the most superb and select entertainments he had ever participated in. The witchery of waltzing music was at that moment over the scene, and fair forms in lace, and silk, and tulle were whirling past like angels of grace. After looking at them a moment, he passed on and encountered a married lady of fifty, one of the leaders of fashion from the metropolis, who immediately greeted him, and taking him by the arm, desired him to conduct her to her daughters, who were disengaged at the other extremity of the ball-room. Her dress was white silk, puffed from the hem up to the knee with white illusion in narrow puffs. She wore an overskirt of illusion caught up at one side with a golden butterfly, and with a broad, point-lace fringe falling to meet the puffing. The short sleeves were looped up with broad, gold chains, and a necklace of medallions joined by bands of gold rested upon the almost youthful snow of her neck. Scarlet flowers were in her corsage and in her dark hair, brushed smoothly back as that of a Grecian statue, and a scarlet shawl was flung over her fair arm for use upon occasional strolls upon the piazza or galleries outside.

"Doubtless you have heard the new rumor, Mr. MacGregor," she said, as they slowly made their way through the clouds of white, and rose color, and straw color which drifted past in the delirium of the waltz.

"Is it eulogy or scandal this time, Mrs. Dubois?" he inquired.

"It is a *mésalliance*," she said. "Place it under whichever of the two you like."

"It may be neither, then," he said. "Go on. I am all eagerness."

"Well, they say Mr. Dashwood has found his soul's idol at last, and that she is now under this roof."

"I don't believe it," he said promptly.

"You ought to be good authority to dissipate such a rumor,"

she said. "The favorite who has the keys to Bluebeard's den should be the first to know his purposes."

As she concluded, she reached forth her fan and touched upon the bare arm a superbly dressed woman, with rather an inelegant amount of *embonpoint*, who was standing near a statue of Anteros, and surveying the scene. The lady whose attention she had attracted, turned, smiled upon the editor, and exchanged comments with him upon the brilliancy of the entertainment. She knew that the fan had been the *avant courier* of some interesting communication, so she turned to the eyes of Mrs. Dubois, which were beaming with their glad tidings, and received this *morceau* for her mental digestion.

"Mr. MacGregor denies that our Wallenstein has selected a partner to preside with him over our *fêtes*."

"That only shows how deep Mr. MacGregor is in the secrets of royalty," was the response. "Mr. Dashwood assured me, in person, not ten minutes ago, that there was not the slightest foundation for the story that he was engaged. I laid my hand upon this avenger," she said, turning to the statue of Anteros, "and threatened Mr. Dashwood if he deserted me. He smiled like a king, as he is, and said: 'The god cannot be incited against me, madam. I am true to you.'"

"Always gallant, always the gentleman," said the editor. "He is the charmer of all hearts. But tell me what fair woman was honored by this false rumor."

"Miss Delancy, the new-comer," exclaimed both ladies at once.

A pang shot through the heart of the listener. Had he not that very evening witnessed more emotion in the master of Beverly, caused by a woman, than the old gentleman had ever manifested in connection with one of the sex before? He had loved the dead mother, why might not the old fancy be renewed in the lovely daughter. After a few more words to conceal his anxiety at the rumor, he conducted Mrs. Dubois across the room to her daughters, and soon left her, seeking for the lovely face of the patrician, who was becoming dearer to him

every instant. He was unable to find her. He talked calmly with groups of the lovely and the gifted, but Miss Delancy did not appear. Where could she be lurking? Could it be possible that some gallant held her fascinated in one of those elegant side nooks, from which ladies sometimes emerged with heightened color to join the dance, viz., the flirtation cabinets? Where was Dashwood? He could not see him either, the master of the revel, the omnipresent host, whose presence acted ever as a spur to enjoyment? Where was the leader? Poor, foolish, human heart! How it grasps at straws when it loves. How it makes mountains out of mole-hills in its painful jealousy. The editor was annoyed not to see Marie Delancy, the maid from whose presence he had fled. "Curse the rumor!" he said to himself. "What a fool I am to think about it. And more, I am a wretch to be angry with my aged friend for admiring that which I, in honor, cannot approach during my entire life."

He wandered everywhere, concealing anguish in laughter and repartee. At length he found Dashwood, radiant in smiles and sparkling with jewels; one of the latter upon his shirt-bosom, as large and beautiful a diamond as the famous "*Rajah Matara*," the third in value in the world. The aged reveller was surrounded by ladies, and was in the highest glee; his words were electric and his influence contagious.

"Hurrah! MacGregor!" he exclaimed, "my dear fellow, is not this bevy of dames enough to drive an octogenarian crazy? all beautiful, all graceful, and all bent upon making an old man dance. They think I don't know modern dances well, and so they expect to make game of me when I enter the intricate mazes. Don't know the modern dances, eh! I'll show you, my fair sylphs, whether I'm up to modern tricks. Old men are '*laudatores temporis acti*,' are they? We'll see. Wait till the band have given those twinkling feet one more round, and then I'm going to dance with every one of your coquettish cabal. There! the waltz is over. Now, ladies fair, I'm going to dance a Virginia reel with every one of you."

Ho ! there, leader, play a reel for us, and a lively one. Form lines for a Virginia reel, fair women and brave men. Here, you compound of *modiste* and angel ; don't run away. I solicit the honor of your hand for this dance," he called out to a blushing brunette of sixteen. " You will accept, eh ? I am honored. Come, then, for the head of the line. Everybody of good taste dances this time with the old man of Beverly. The reel is my favorite. Ho ! there, leader of the band, strike up and give us wild-fire this time."

And thus were the lines formed, young and old joining in, for his eyes ran over the ball-room, and his every glance was a word of command. Down through the middle flew the white-haired *savant* and the brunette with red roses in her cheeks and hair, he in black, with white cravat and diamonds, she in floating white, with cherry-colored sash and bows. The couple at the opposite ends of the lines who came down to meet them were a young naval officer in full uniform, just arrived, and his bride, attired in a robe of shimmering white satin, the graceful train veiled by an overskirt of point lace, festooned with sprays of orange-blossoms, the corsage *décolleté*, garlanded with same flowers, and the tulle veil just shading a pair of lovely shoulders. The exhilaration of the music and the flying step seemed to arouse all the dormant wit and cunning of the old man's head ; and when he came to swing the ladies from the long line, he chatted incessantly to them, exciting mirth by his comments upon their dress and appearance. Thoroughly a master of *la science du monde*, he knew all the details of feminine dress and the harmony of colors. He could fling quick and covert sarcasms at the effect of dress, which were caught only by the ears for which they were intended, or he could utter some louder comment, which set the whole party in convulsions of laughter. His merry mood infected the entire throng as he flew along, and all pronounced him the most charming host that ever flung open drawing-room doors for hospitality. Even MacGregor, with the burden of expectation

upon him, found himself at last roaring with laughter at the man's sallies.

Then followed a series of "round" dances, new parties of gayly attired guests arriving every moment from their quarters in the palace. When the ball was at its height, the editor found an opportunity to whisper to the host :

"Where is Miss Delancy to-night?"

"She remains with her aunt in retirement," was the reply. "They are both too fatigued by their journey to make their appearance before to-morrow. So they sent me word. But come to supper. Half the company are already there, and I am hungry as a wolf."

He took the arm of the editor, and also that of the young lady to whom he had been making himself agreeable, and the trio walked away to a grand saloon, paved with blue and yellow tiles, and hung with curtains of gold cloth and blue satin. The floor was covered with small circular tables of yellow marble placed in the centre of white-marble imitation of sea-shells drawn by golden swans. The seats in the shells were for parties of four, and were in imitation of twisted white-coral branches, and were covered with blue velvet. Young girls, dressed like fairies, with silver wings, were in attendance upon the guests, while from a balcony a band of music was whispering melody to the stars. Wine was sparkling on every side, and viands were being served up by the attendant fairies, which rivalled in delicacy and rarity those prepared by the hands of Louis XV., and De Coigni, and De la Vallière at *les petits soupers* in the palace Le Petit Trianon. Through the great open windows were caught glimpses of enchanting gardens, with colored lights twinkling away amid the foliage, and fountains flinging up spray to the stars. Little girls in white, crowned and covered with flowers, stole in and out at intervals, bearing silver baskets of fruits, luscious as those of Armida.

After a hearty repast the editor escorted the young lady who had accompanied him to supper out into the gardens. The night was lovely, and couples were strolling everywhere.

Hardly had the two seated themselves near the edge of the cliff upon which the palace was built, when the eyes of MacGregor detected, across the valley, and against the dark background of a pine forest, a star twinkle into existence, expand, and grow more luminous every instant. He called the attention of his companion to the marvel in so close proximity to the ground. As they gazed, another and another made its appearance, until finally the whole opposite side of the ravine was radiant with a line of luminous objects. Suddenly they burst, and showers of fire curved down into the darkness of the valley. Then darted hundreds of rockets into the air, and balls of scarlet and blue fire rose heavenward, bursting at great altitude, with reports which summoned all the revellers in the palace to the open air. Presently the far-off temple-gate of white marble, beyond the valley, burst forth into a temple of fire. Then came the blast of silver bugles from every surrounding hill-top, and, at that signal, every hill was crowned with scarlet or green fire. The highest one of all soon showed a palace of fire, up to whose colonnades long lines of men were marching with colored torches from every side of the base. It was a sublime spectacle. And when the hill was covered with the torch-bearers, apparently as close as they could stand together, the whole hill burst forth into one grand blaze of Roman candles, hurling fiery balls into the firmament. The assembled guests of Beverly were wild with exultation. The old banker had given them a superb surprise.

Slowly faded away the glowing structures of the pyrotechnist. At length darkness settled once more upon the valley, and the high grounds grew indistinct. Only the gentle starlight was over the earth, and all was stillness and night. Then, from the direction of the lake in the valley, a strange sound boomed upon the night, solemn, and suggestive of death and evil. It was the mournful clang of a funeral bell. Deep, and regular, and sad were the vibrations coming up out of the impenetrable darkness. All hearts were attentive, all light laughter was hushed. The bell seemed to be upon the bosom of

the lake. Suddenly the sound ceased. Then a faint brightness fluttered upon the water. It slowly assumed shape—the misty, moonlight fabric. The proportions became manifest. The hull was visible. The masts held the open, windless sails, and the intangible bowsprit extended out over the water. A murmur of admiration stole about among the guests. It was the *Phantom Ship*, drifting, drifting, with its spirit-crew, forever. Slowly, slowly it moved along in the gloom, with only the stars above in the far-off heaven. Freightened with the loved and the lost, it glided on slowly, and so ethereal, that it seemed as if a zephyr would dissolve it. Then it grew fainter in the gloom, swung slowly round to the west, and then faded utterly away. The wizard of Beverly was at his best. They sought for him to express their appreciation. They found him standing upon the edge of the cliff, alone, and looking off over the valley, with his arms folded. He shook off his gloom at the sound of their approaching voices, and entering into their midst, received their congratulations, and then, with his quick, nervous step, led the way through the gardens, and entering the ball-room, gave the signal to the band to re-open the revelry.

When the *Phantom Ship* was at its perfection, and the young lady beside him was murmuring her appreciation, MacGregor noticed that a lady in white came to a window of the palace near to the shrubbery where he sat concealed, and holding back the white curtain (which was the only color Mr. Dashwood would allow on the north side of the building, in order to produce the cloud effect from the valley), gazed in silence upon the lake below. His heart beat fast, for it was the elegant figure of Miss Delancy. She did not see him, and he looked long at her in her absorption. The lights of the garden revealed her face distinctly, and he fancied she looked pale. With full power came back upon him the love which had made him flee from her in the city. He realized then how bitter was his fate. He could only look upon this lovely, gifted woman from afar. His heart revolted again against the laws of the church. Born to love, he must starve for tenderness when the perfection of truth

and gentleness was just in his path. Betrayed by the false, he must suffer alone and avoid the true. Fame, power, and friends he would gladly exchange for one draught from the cup which had been always the ideal cup for him, love, love. How, in the maturity of his powers, he craved it, some one to nestle close to his lion-heart, to receive all the weight and richness of the tenderness born in him and quivering in every vein of his body. He yearned to be dependent upon another for his peace and happiness. Must it be ever so? The poor, hungry heart starving when so many women are willing, nay, dying to feed it, is a strange dispensation of the good God. Because this man had married a traitoress, and been deserted in a temporary trouble, was it justice that he should suffer an entire life for that which he was so worthy to enjoy and knew so well how to appreciate. If ever on the broad earth one man deserved to have a true, loving wife, that man was MacGregor. He was wrestling like a giant with his enemy, Sin, sin by the law of the church, felony by the law of the state. He could not, with his high sense of honor and his religious instinct, fail to win the mastery. But was it necessary that this innocent man should suffer a lifetime of loneliness and heart-hunger, when the unfortunate circumstances in which he was involved were the result of a woman's wickedness and not his own? In the face of the state and of priests, the human heart, which is loyal to principles, will sometimes ask bold and startling questions.

CHAPTER XXXII.

*"For loyalty is still the same,
Whether it win or lose the game;
True as the dial to the sun,
Although it be not shined upon."*

AFTER the elegant constraint of female society, the editor found the *laissez aller* of his private rooms particularly agreeable. Anxious only to meet Miss Delancy once more, he had lost all interest in the ball after ascertaining that she would not be present. After the Phantom Ship, therefore, had vanished, he sought the first opportunity for escape from the festive halls, and retired to his apartments. He could still hear the music of the bands, but it was too remote to interfere with the labor to which he had resolved to devote a couple of hours before seeking his bed. Arrayed in his dressing-gown, he threw himself at ease upon a lounge, and ran over the events and scenes since his entrance to the grounds of Beverly. Then, full of gratitude for the unbounded hospitality which had been extended to him, he drew a chair to a table, and penned a long letter to his own paper in the metropolis. He described Beverly and its master in terms well calculated to create a sensation. The banker had fascinated him, as he fascinated all who came within reach. Profound as Locke, plausible as Lavater, with powers of ridicule like Cervantes, perfect in *belles-lettres*, his energy equalled only by his brilliancy, his recondite acquirements, marvellous for a financier, his winning suavity, the delicacy of his taste as a *virtuoso*, the inexhaustible resources of his intellect, eloquent and sophistical as Carneades, a mediocrist in nothing; such were the terms in which MacGregor wrote to his paper, and what he wrote he believed. Then followed an elaborate description of Beverly, and the ball, and the prominent people from the metropolis who had attended it. Nor did he forget to mention the literary young lady to whom Mr. Dashwood had called his attention, and who was standing expectant at the threshold of fame.

The sun had fully emerged from the horizon when the writer flung himself upon his bed and slept. His last thought was, "To-day I shall see *her*."

When he awoke it was near midday, and he found a boy seated near his bed, by direction of Mr. Dashwood, to provide him with whatever light repast of fruit or coffee he might desire before turning over for a second sleep. He directed the servant to prepare a full and final breakfast for him, while he took a bath. The boy sped noiselessly away in his velvet slippers, and the editor arose. The thought was uppermost of his expected meeting with Miss Delancy. His soul was full of her, and the recollection of his fetters galled him more violently than ever. How would the fair girl meet him, in sunshine or in cloud? A secret yearning to have her sympathy, at least, possessed him. From his estimate of her character, he could not believe she would despise him. His own straightforward conduct should entitle him to her respect. He knew that vigilant and sleepless espionage must be maintained over his words when the interview occurred. He must not lower one inch the high standard of honor he had held up before her. In this accidental and unavoidable meeting under the same roof she must see him as his letter had portrayed him, strong over himself. He must maintain the constancy of the noble-minded to principle.

Nevertheless he thought, as he made his toilette, of the unusual care he was taking to make himself appear well in the eyes of the fair maid. The brown hair, clinging in half curly masses to his finely formed head received a trifle more attention than usual. His white collar turned over a black neck-handkerchief, tied just a little more in Byronic ease than was his wont. His black frock-coat half revealed a vest of white, and his lavender-colored pantaloons fitted with the most perfect ease over polished boots, a trifle more glove-like in their fit than usual. Not a single flash of jewelry was upon him, no studs, no watch-chain, no rings. He was descended from Christian kings of Scotland, not barbaric. His gray eyes, lustrous with thought

and full of magnetic power, had beamed upon the dreams of more than one sleeping beauty of the metropolis. They were potent in expression when he was conversing. At other times they seemed to dream in the ecstasy of idealization. Severe mental labor had chiselled away the flesh of the face, and deepened its lines, until intensity was its prevailing characteristic, and its suggestion purity, purity obtained as by fire. Just a trifle of the quivering of the old agony lingered about the pale lips, the agony which had once filled the beautiful eyes with the glare of vengeance. The storm had passed over the superb face, and it could never again be so confiding a face as of yore. But power was there, and ineffable, and women said there was ineffable tenderness, too, if one could only touch the hidden spring.

And so, with the glamour of matured beauty, and just the faintest touch of mystery upon him, the journalist sat down at last to discuss his breakfast, and the newspaper from the city, and to dream of Marie Delancy. He concluded his meal finally, and fell into a reverie when the boy had removed the dishes and left him to himself. The newspaper fell to the floor, and he shaded his eyes with his hand, looking out upon the summer sky. He was considering the plan by which he intended to divert Miss Delancy from her purpose of going upon the stage, by the use of the check Mr. Dashwood had given him. He saw that a new plan was feasible to effect this result, by the unexpected arrival of the young lady's female relative. At least a new plan suggested itself in connection with the aunt's arrival, and he determined to make some inquiries of his host regarding this lady before deciding definitely upon the course he would pursue. With this purpose in view, he walked slowly through his suite of rooms to see if Mr. Dashwood was engaged or had gone out. He wore slippers, so that his advance was noiseless. Passing through his bathing-room and his bedchamber he entered the private library. It was deserted, and he continued on until he reached the curtain which

divided the library from the banker's private parlor. He drew this aside and looked into the room of drab and gold.

The vision was startling, and he could scarcely credit his senses. After a second look he dropped the curtain, and unseen and unheard, stole away. He was deathly pale. Every bright dream in his life was annihilated. He glided like an image of despair to his parlor, and sinking to his seat, buried his face in his hands. Then, and only then, did he realize how absolutely Marie Delancy had become essential to his happiness. And he knew, too, at that moment that she was lost to him forever. Yes, lost, if every state and ecclesiastical barrier should be broken down by the death of his wife. He could never, never seek her hand now. All was lost. The curtain which he had raised in hope he had let fall in utter despair. What he had seen was conclusive. Miss Delancy could never by any fortuitous combination of circumstances become his wife.

"Oh God! have mercy upon me," he gasped. "I am entering the portals of a second great agony. Is there to be no happiness for me in this life? Doomed, doomed to solitude and regret."

Too well he comprehended now the banker's anxiety to keep Miss Delancy from the stage. It was evident now why the old man would hesitate at no expense necessary to thwart her purpose. Was it possible that his aged friend would deliberately deceive him? He had assured the editor on the day before that he had not yet been made acquainted with the young lady. And now something had transpired under his own eyes which conflicted with the banker's statement. Either Mr. Dashwood was false, or Miss Delancy was too forward for refinement and delicacy. The vision behind the curtain was startling. The master of Beverly was seated in a large easy chair, and in his lap sat the beautiful girl, dressed in spotless white, with both her arms thrown lovingly around the old man's neck, and looking up into his face with affection, deep and unmistakable. The presentation must have occurred that very morning, if the banker had spoken truth. And here, within four or five hours

only of acquaintance, they were fast and demonstrative lovers. A gasp of jealousy came to MacGregor ; then despair at the obliteration of every hope which had nestled at his heart, and then the sense of shame at witnessing the secret interview of unconscious lovers, which had accelerated his departure. Should he taunt the old man with his hypocrisy and deceit, the man who had made much of the word friendship, and invited so much of his confidence ? His final impulse was to ignore the affair altogether, and live henceforward in trust with no man. And could it be possible that a clear-headed, sensible, gifted girl, like Miss Delancy, could fall in love at sight with an octogenarian ? The haste of the affair was unseemly, and, in the midst of his distress, was inexplicable to him. But the intensity of the passion was beyond dispute. They loved. The attitude, the place, the looks excluded doubt. The woman who had aroused love in his heart was clasped in the arms of another.

But after an hour of painful reflections, it occurred to him that justice demanded of him greater leniency towards his aged friend than his jealousy was prompting. Perhaps the old man who had manifested such kindness towards him was not deceiving him. He might have told the truth, and have fallen in love with the young lady at sight, and met with a response from her heart. This conclusion would leave Miss Delancy in the position of a weak woman, devoid of delicacy, and chargeable with precipitancy. But such had been the trusting nature of MacGregor, and so violently had his false wife shaken his belief in the stability of women, that he rather leaned towards men now for integrity. It was easier for the man who had idealized women, and been deceived, to trust man than woman. And so the true heart of the editor yearned to know that Mr. Dashwood was truthful, and Miss Delancy precipitate in her efforts to entrap a rich old man. The bitter sarcasm latent in him came to the surface, and found vent in words thus :

“A wonderful woman truly was she who thanked God that one thing reconciled her to being a woman, viz., that she would never have to marry one. Aye ! Woman, the soul of fraud, in

the guise of an angel, employing the gentleness of the dove and the graceful movement of the antelope, in order to murder the heart. Stealing upon the strong by the unguarded way of tenderness, entering the citadel of the human heart by the holy path one's mother entered, in order to weigh and plunder the gold value of that heart. Unstable as the wind, smoothing the forehead of the sick, in order the better to betray when well, and to gain a firmer grasp upon the purse. Counterfeiting all the purest emotions of the heart, in order to give more craftily the kiss of Judas. Woman, the despiser of stability, and integrity, and poverty, and the ever-ready slave to lick the feet of gold; pleased by the adulation of the coxcomb too; shallow to appreciate the true man; permitting the husband to toil all day, that she may wear the gewgaws of the savage at night; incapable of friendship for her own sex, because she knows them all too well. As the daughter, she twines her arms around the tender old father's neck, and speaks in the gentle maxims of Jesus, in order that she may win from the old man a portion of her brother's inheritance. As the sister, she pens sweet words of affection, that she may the better put covert enmity between the brother and his wife, and thus rule both. As the daughter-in-law, she names her infant after the old man—the outer purpose courtesy, the inner purpose gold from his purse. As the wife, she whispers the celestial words of love, because she recognizes in the man certain powers to accumulate gold, silks, velvets, jewels, carriages, horses, houses, positions, honors. Just as surely, just as keenly, oh man, does she value you by the income you can bring, as the tradesman who is so courteous and sweet, and opens your carriage door with a smile. If you question it, try the sublime qualities upon her, and tie the purse-strings. Conceal your means of income, and appear by misfortune to be going down-hill. Do this persistently and craftily in your experiment, for woman scents hidden gold as the hound the print of the deer's hoof in the leaves.

"Yes, old Dashwood, I will trust you rather than woman. You had gold and you sought a friend who was poor, a friend

in a profession where legitimate and honest wealth rarely comes—just a support and no more. You have the wealth which purchases butterflies, and you know, by long experience, the value of such purchases. You were a sufferer, God knows how and when. The world was selfish and a mockery to you, and yet within you smouldered the youthful fire, the desire, the burning hunger for an unselfish friend to love you. You have surrounded yourself by a brilliant crowd of the purchasable, and yet something within you said: 'Take no one but the poor editor into your holy of holies.' Now that I am within the sanctuary, shall I defile it by suspicion and distrust of you? Never! Old man! you have a friend whom your confidence and unbounded trust has made adamant. Take the girl if you will. I believe every word you have told me, and what I have seen I have seen only through your perfect trust. Old man! friendship does live, and MacGregor stands by you to the end. I trust no more in woman. Live friendship. Perish love."

He knew not how long he meditated in his room. The decisions were forming which would influence the residue of his life. Illusions were fading away fast now, and he anchored his heart by friendship alone. It is a cruel blow that shivers man's faith in woman, for on that instant an everlasting sneer nestles closely to the heart. The perfidy of the wife had paved the way for a whole procession of doubts. He knew he never could be the same man again. The shadows of life were deeper. Eternity had charms that time would never have again. But an intense heart, the narrower becomes the circle in which it confides, concentrates double the power of love upon that which it does love. So it was with a feeling of relief and joy for the companionship that the editor heard the quick, nervous footsteps of the vigorous old man approaching. The curtain was thrust aside, and the dark eyes and white hair of the master of Beverly appeared.

"Congratulate me, my dear friend," he said, as his eloquent eyes brightened to find MacGregor present. "I thought you had gone out ere this to breathe the fresh air. Congratulate

me that I have succeeded in dissuading my new guest, your beautiful friend, Miss Delancy, from going upon the stage. Your kindly volunteered services in that business are no longer required. But I thank you just as earnestly as if you had gone forth upon that mission."

The editor was now satisfied that the offer of the banker's hand to the young lady had forever debarred her from going before the public as a singer. Doubtless a speedy marriage would ensue, and the great matrimonial problem of the *élite* would be solved. With the strong will for which his race had ever been renowned, he curbed all outburst of annoyance, and rising, approached his aged friend with both hands extended, saying :

"Whatever affords you pleasure will ever give your friend satisfaction. I am glad, too, on Miss Delancy's account, that she has determined to remain in private life. There are trials through which a public singer has to pass which gentlemen of the press understand better than most people. But you are a wonderful man to accomplish your ends. I should have fancied that the young lady's letter would have deterred you from making any further attempt in person."

"Ordinary attempts having failed, I pursued my usual course of resorting to extraordinary ones," was the response. "My sudden impulses are sometimes my most successful servants. Impulses are oftentimes to the bold of heart the very best counsellors."

"I know it, Mr. Dashwood," was the reply, as the editor drew up a chair for him beside his own. "Impulse to men of genius is oftentimes the equivalent to inspiration. Great men gain their ends by means beyond the grasp of common intellects. Aye! even by methods diametrically opposite to those the mass of men would pursue. The transient and evanescent lightning shatters, by a circuitous route, in an instant, bulwarks which the direct play of regular artillery would not destroy in a week. You have performed the more difficult feat of destroying a woman's will."

Mr. Dashwood laughed, and said: "It was a woman's will backed by that devil of potency, a woman's pride. The beautiful and majestic creature would never have taken one cent from a stranger."

"How then, in the name of the miraculous, did you reach the citadel of her obstinacy?" exclaimed MacGregor.

"Are you my confidant, Mr. Editor? Have I not admitted you to the sanctum of my heart? Do I not lay open to you from time to time, as impulse dictates, glimmerings of that utter inner life which puzzles the crowd? Then listen to me, and take another fragment of revelation from the old man of Beverly, and bury the secret in your trustworthy heart. Know, then, that this young lady, who would not, with her pride, look at one cent of purchase-money from a stranger, relented when the sphinx of Beverly convinced her that he was no stranger."

"No stranger, Mr. Dashwood! and she was presented to you to-day for the first time?" exclaimed the editor.

"No stranger," was the response, given with a smile. "Miss Delancy has known me long. God grant that others of my acquaintance may not turn up soon. She is enough for one day. No matter. What I am saying to you is truth, and I intrust it to you without further explanation. Give me the check again. I will give it to you in my will, for you will not rejoice at the old man's death."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

*"Small is the worth of riches and of state
On whose possession fear and peril wait;
And what of joy can silken pomp afford
When dire suspicion haunts its gloomy lord?"*
Orlando Inamorato.

THE inevitable meeting occurred. The journalist met face to face the young lady from whom he had fled. It was upon a gallery facing the west. It was the sunset hour, and she was sitting alone with a drawing in her lap, and with her arm resting upon the railing. Colors too subtle and brilliant for the palette of any human artist lingered upon the sky, and she was enjoying them in silence. She turned at the sound of approaching footsteps, and a flush stole to her cheek when she saw who was coming. When he was near he recognized her just as she arose and extended to him both hands in greeting. The cordiality was too marked and too natural to allow the slightest embarrassment to remain with him. His former tenderness for her rushed back upon him as he held her hands, and discovered the interest in the beautiful eyes for him.

"Fate has brought us together again, Miss Delancy, and the meeting is delightful to me."

"So is it to me, Mr. MacGregor. Draw up a chair, and we will renew the friendship which made my life so happy."

When the editor was seated beside her, she said:

"Tell me all about Dream-child. Where is she?"

Pointing to a white spot far below, and barely visible in the foliage by the fading light of day, he said:

"She is there. You can see the home of Dream-child quite plainly by daylight. Do you see the far-off white-house half buried in the foliage? That is my summer home."

"Yes," she said. "I see what you are pointing at, and so near to the dear old manor, so near. Does she talk about me ever, Mr. MacGregor?"

"Every day she has something to say about Tooty. She is a faithful little friend, and no pleasant memory ever dies out in her."

"Will you permit me to go and see her? My heart yearns toward that child."

After a pause, during which her eyes timidly regarded him, he said :

"How long will you remain in this neighborhood, and at what house will you stay? Answer me these questions if you can, and I will see how I can arrange interviews for you."

"I am going in two or three days," she replied, "to visit at the house of my old rector, the Rev. Henry Morgan. My aunt, who is here with me, accompanies me. I may remain there several weeks. After that, I shall go to live with my grandmother in the adjoining town. You know I told you all about her and her cottage."

"Yes," he said, "I remember about it. Now, under this state of things, it will be very easy to arrange about Dream-child. While you are at the clergyman's house I will send her on her pony, attended by a servant, to call upon you every day. I want her to have that exercise after study. When you go to reside with your grandmother, I will see that she visits you sometimes there, until we return to the city."

"How delightful!" exclaimed Miss Delancy. "Then she is to be in my arms every day. I did not anticipate this."

"But tell me," he said, concealing his knowledge of her withdrawal from the contract with Matzek, "when does your own return to the city occur?"

"Oh! I shall not go back at all."

"Indeed! You have then abandoned your purpose of going to the footlights?"

"Yes. That is all over now. I can support my grandmother without it."

"I congratulate you, Miss Delancy, that fortune has been propitious to you."

He looked at her so inquiringly, that she knew some expla-

nation was proper to one who had been intrusted with her plans and her motives, and had been so prompt and zealous in forwarding them.

"No fortune has been left to me, Mr. MacGregor. I am abandoning the stage (and this I intrust to you as a friend, who has a certain claim upon me for explanation), because it is proper I should obey one who has authority over me. He has interposed by virtue of that authority, and I only follow the dictates of duty and respect in giving up my purpose. My grandmother and I will be placed beyond the reach of want by this friend. There is no stranger to my blood except you to whom I would communicate this motive for my abandoning the stage. It is a family secret confided to you, my truest and best friend."

"It is safe with me, Miss Delancy," was the response of the journalist, who saw now that the young lady was indeed the *fiancée* of Mr. Dashwood.

The conversation then wandered to other subjects, each being under the influence of emotions, which must henceforward be cherished in secret. The conduct of the man was now guarded by two principles, for which he would rather go to the stake than break over them by word or look. One was the conviction that for a married man to speak of or betray evidence of love to a maid was criminal in the eyes of God and upright men; the other was that fine and delicate, but powerful sense of honor which protects the wife or *fiancée* of a friend from reproach, and in personal intimacy with her, guards lips and eyes from all manifestations of tenderness. His heart was not cooling towards the lovely patrician before him, much as he had anticipated that result when he saw her in the arms of Mr. Dashwood. The wonderful loveliness of the maid, and the calm air of superiority with which she had manifested her power to buffet with the world when the necessity had arisen, had stolen to the roots of his heart, and grappled them forever. The nobler and more disinterested worship of that which was no longer approachable, was arising in his heart. Constancy

to principle, unflagging resolution in that once undertaken, and will powerful under all adversities—these were his gifts of inheritance from the noble old Scottish line from which he came. Into this fortified nature, an ally entered to aid him in the hour of peril—the Spirit of God. It was the powerful, innate sense of justice and hatred for treachery which had once fired his blood for the murder of his wife. Outside of the Christian impulse, the noblest instinct of all races is that of the Indian—excessive gratitude, or excessive revenge. The noblest men of all ages, within or without the Christian fold, have been the men of hot and fiery impulse. Look to them for generous deeds. Look to their opposites for the great meannesses of life. Their opposites have accumulated fortunes ten to one. Their opposites have lived longer in offices of emolument and power, but when the grass covered them from the sight of men, few shed earnest tears, and felt that a great loss had fallen upon the heart. MacGregor once aroused, was terrible as the old chieftains of the Highlands; but when once he forgave, it was a noble forgiveness—without stint, boundless. He had forgiven the woman who had wronged him. Just before him now lay the opportunity for a stupendous manifestation of what a MacGregor's pardon signified. He was noble all through. Great in his ire, great in his powers of endurance, great in his forgiveness, sublime in the intensity and purity of his love. And so he sat beside the woman whom he loved with all the strength of his lion-heart, and talked as calmly to her as a brother. Through his entire life, now, he would conceal the thorn at his heart, and smile with all the sweetness of his superb face. And out of the innate purity of the maid beside him, and out of the sublime appreciation of her noble and courageous heart, was every instant arising a perfect understanding of the nobility of character which prompted every act, and word, and look of the man. She comprehended every mental and spiritual struggle of the man. Had she not passed through them all herself? Did she not look upon that face, *chiselled* in the beauty and power of the Belvidere Apollo,

and know that the pure love of that man of principle was worth more than all the combined adorations of the depraved and capricious beaux of the metropolis, who had always danced attendance upon her in society? Never, while breath dwelt in her peerless frame, or the harmonies of music and Christian character whispered around her heart, would she tempt this noble to break through the barriers he had named to her, to gratify her coquettish or womanly vanity. She, too, was wearing about her heart a crown of thorns, and he did not know it. And the greater the necessity of guarded words and schooled looks became, the more promptly did she respond to the demand. They spoke of everything beautiful and noble, but love. She confided to him her yearning for the old home of her ancestors, which lay stretched in its night shadows below them, the grand manor now in strange hands. She recurred to that ever-mysterious tragedy which had enveloped her family in suspicion, and the rumor of which had traversed every section of the State. The same dark, impenetrable veil hung over the murder as on the day her father, Arthur Delaſncy, had gone forth acquitted from the crowded court-house. Where was the body of the victim, and who was the guilty one? These two interrogatories had become the subject for controversy in the chimney-corner of every house, high or low, in the county. Was reliance still to be placed upon that ancient and universal proverb—"Murder will out"? The months and the years were passing, and no clue was revealed to the perpetrator of the deed. Who killed Hartwell upon the day of his entry into the manor-house? Aye! farther back, who murdered the stranger buried near the manor-gate. As the night deepened upon the two as they leaned upon the railing of the gallery of Beverly, and looked down upon the gloomy manor, and discussed the tragedy which had made it so famous in the annals of crime, they noted not that eyes were upon them, but not the eyes of the revellers, whose laughter and voices they could hear through the palace, and on the piazza. In the gray of the gloaming some one had come to an open window over

which venetian blinds hung, and stood there, listening to their conversation. They were so engrossed in converse and in study of the fading glories of the sunset, that they had not noticed the footstep of the intruder, as the approach to the window was made in soft slippers. And thus, as the night deepened, the figure, which at first might have been detected behind the venetian blinds had they chanced to turn, now became utterly obscured by the shades of night, and could safely remain and listen unobserved. Something of the patience and immobility of the military sentinel close upon dangerous lines of the enemy characterized the figure behind the blinds, while the two conversed of nature and art. But when at length the conversation turned upon the manor and the murder, the shadowy figure pressed a trifle closer to the venetian blinds. Some wonderful fascination was surely in the story of Hartwell's disappearance, for the hidden figure held its breath, so valuable were several items which came out from MacGregor and his companion, items which the general public had not yet been favored with. These were the revelations of Dream-child's marvellous clairvoyance, and the words she had read in the old sailor's mind, while seated in his lap in the jewelry shop, and which had been communicated to the detective office, viz. :

"Hartwell is murdered. If I keep my mouth shut no one will ever know who did it."

The figure behind the blinds was patient and motionless, and soon was rewarded by additional information. The two became so interested in the tragedy they were discussing that they reminded each other of the details which they had known before, and some new items came out for Miss Delancy's edification, particularly the fact of Dream-child's obstinacy and reticence when she ascertained that they were trying to use her to gain evidence which would result in the strangling of a human being to death. The editor declared his belief that the suggestion to the strange child of an execution had closed up her little, innocent heart, and filled her with such horror that she could no

longer be used to ferret out the old sailor. All this the concealed figure heard with breathless interest. But when Miss Delancy referred to the disclosure she had made at the police headquarters of the unknown sailor's present to her grandmother of a bag of gold for pecuniary service once rendered him, the shadowy personage behind the blinds seemed filled with horror, and said mentally :

"Great God ! how unfortunate a disclosure. Now they will suspect, and hunt, and persecute, and perhaps imprison the poor old lady. They must be on her trail now. I will save her."

This conversation closed at last by the interruption of the usual grand illumination of the palace. The two seemed to realize then the prolonged character of their interview, and parted to dress for the evening. Not until they were gone did the figure behind the venetian blinds move away. Then with an easy, gliding, noiseless but rapid step the listener passed away too.

That night, near the hour of twelve, while the dancing was merriest and wildest, a servant in buff livery, with a golden horse-shoe upon his left breast, entered the dancing-hall, and with serious face approached the master of Beverly, who stood as usual surrounded by superbly attired ladies. He whispered to his master, and receiving some instructions in response, withdrew with a low bow. Immediately Mr. Dashwood turned to the ladies and begged them by no means to allow his departure to interfere with the dance. He had been summoned by the chief groom of his stables to the stall of his favorite horse, which was very sick, and he desired that they would excuse him for a time. Then hastily he passed out of the palace and followed the groom down the steps leading from the piazza to the racing track. The night was starless, and there were evidences in the sky that a storm was approaching. Black masses of clouds were sweeping up from the south, and a sullen roar, far away, betokened the solemnity of midnight thunder. Hurriedly the old man, hatless and in his ball dress, and with the first puffs of the wind lifting his long white hair upon his shoulders, passed.

over the course and overtook the chief groom just as he had entered one of the stables and taken a lantern from an iron hook near the door.

"Lock the door," he said promptly, upon entering. The groom obeyed the order in silence, and they were secure from interruption.

"Mark," he said, again addressing the man: "You are the truest and most accomplished servant I ever had. You have managed this well. Now play your part as well to keep inquisitive people out of the stable until late to-morrow morning."

"Trust me, sir," was the response. "Here are the old clothes. Nobody will know you from a groom."

He produced an old suit of his own cast-off stable clothing from under the hay, and aided his master to exchange them for his ball dress, which he hid away under the hay. He could not avoid a laugh at the metamorphose in his master. The old man smiled grimly too, and then placing an old slouched hat of black felt over his head, said, extending his hand:

"Here is a roll of money for you. You are worth your weight in gold to me."

"It is too much, sir," was the reply of the groom. "You have already given me fifty dollars. Keep it; you may need it on your journey."

"Nonsense, Mark," said the disguised master. "I have plenty. There, take it, my good fellow. I will provide for you handsomely after a while. Now I am ready, lower away."

The head groom took the money, thanked him for it, and then held the lantern so that his master could find the elevator, in a little side room, by means of which grain, hay, or vehicles could be raised to the race-course from the valley below. Mr. Dashwood entered upon the platform, and the chief groom put the machinery in motion, by which the old man was slowly lowered into the darkness. Scarcely had his head disappeared in the descent, when a terrific peal of thunder burst over the black sky. The chief groom shook his head at the report, and muttered:

"A fearful night for an adventure ! Some say the good old man is in league with the devil. He don't mind storms, sure. He told me his life had been full of hardships. I believe it. His arm is like a blacksmith's. No ! harder than that, is it ; it is a bar of iron, pig-iron, no flesh, all muscle. I wouldn't have him strike me, old as he is. He is a giant for strength. What can the old fellow be after such a night ?"

Slowly, slowly fell the platform, going down into the darkness. Then came a sudden illumination of all things. Instantly darkness, and then the reverberation of thunder. Again the lightning played over Beverly, and again followed the artillery of the heavens, but no rain fell. The platform reached the valley at length, and touched the earth in the midst of a cluster of white pines. All was gloom, until a man advanced with a stable-lantern, whose light he flung full into the face of Mr. Dashwood.


"All right, my master," he exclaimed, upon recognizing him. "When you get something over your face, nobody will suspect you."

Then he extended his hand to aid the old gentleman over the loose rocks, among which he stepped, upon leaving the platform. At the distance of a few rods, they came to a carriage under the cliff. The man flung open the door, and Mr. Dashwood entered the vehicle, and was safe from the rain which began to patter upon the leathern roof. He took the lantern into the carriage with him and extinguished the light. The strange guide then closed the carriage door, mounted to the box, and drove off through the woods which filled the western end of the valley. After a cautious drive among the trees and through the storm, which now beat pitilessly down from the clouds, the driver reached a private gate of Beverly, opened it, and led his horses out upon the public highway.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

*"Thy wavy hair, a golden shower,
Upon thy brow disposed apart,
Half bound beneath the white veil's fold,
Half down thy bosom rolled
In graceful negligence of art."*

S. A. Weiss.

HEN the summer evening fell softly over the earth, Dream-child had abandoned the lawn with its flowers, and sat upon her little chair under the porch, watching the birds fly away to their nests for the night. As the last colors lingered upon the sky, she sat dreamily gazing at them, and fancying them to be purple barques upon a mystic sea of gold. Then, as the shades of night began to obscure the outlines of her favorite elms, which drooped their branches so gracefully to the brook, the old lady who had charge of the house brought to her the bowl of bread and milk, and berries, which constituted her evening meal, and allowed her to eat under the porch, making the bench there her table. When this repast was over the old lady amused her with the stories of Fairy-land, which had made her own childhood so full of fanciful delights. And all the time listening with silent rapture, the child never forgot the great event of the night, but ever and anon turned from the story-teller to watch the summit of the mountain beyond the dark, funereal woods. She would not, in the excitements of the fairy wonders narrated by her companion, lose that real fairy spectacle, which, at a particular hour, burst to life high up upon the shadowy phantom, the mountain of Beverly. There, for her, was the real palace of the prince towards whose illuminated windows Cinderella had gazed with delight at her approach to her first ball. Every night the brilliant illumination of Beverly burst upon the darkness like a vision of a celestial mansion, and the little girl, as she gazed in ever new amazement at the lovely spectacle, clapped her hands, and exclaimed, "There is Heaven, and MacGregor is there." Every night did she insist upon having the old lady define ex-

actly how many days would still elapse before he would return to her. Then, in silence, she would sit under the porch, looking away to the celestial glory which had settled upon the shoulder of the mountain with a canopy of stars behind it. It was full of wonder, and she longed to be there with him.

But now a night had come with no stars peeping from its blackness. There was a gloomy appearance everywhere, and she made many inquiries whether the fire palace would come if the stars stayed away. At last her questions were answered from the mountain. Amid the gloom of the approaching storm, Beverly suddenly burst into light as usual, a marvellous effect, so fearful was all else. She sat silently gazing and fancying what MacGregor was doing there, that kept him so long away from his little girl. Then the appointed hour for her retirement having arrived, she was hurried away to her bed in the wing, which was surrounded by shrubbery and flowers that nodded to her as she lay with half-opened eyes, until she fancied them to be spirits waving magic wands at her. The summer air was sultry, so the chamber window had been left open, that any wandering breeze might fan her cheek and lift the golden floss of her hair with its spirit-like touch. The old lady had kissed her and called her "a fairy's child," before she took away the lamp, and the little one kept murmuring the words to herself when she was alone, and finally with the comment, "perhaps Dream-child is," she closed her eyes and gently slept.

From dreams of the gentle and the musical, she opened her eyes at last in wonder upon the fearful and the sublime. A terrific crash of thunder awakened her, but disturbed not the profound slumber of the weary old lady in the adjoining room. Dream-child, unconscious of danger, sat upright in her white night-dress, and flooded with her glorious wealth of hair like an over-mantle of gold. She enjoyed the brilliant play of the lightning, which illumined her room and brought out clearly the shapes of the surrounding trees and shrubbery. She listened, half awed, to the peals of thunder ; and when she found they did

not harm her, she sat speculating upon what particular giant was in a rage and hurling great rocks down upon his enemies. Then she listened to the tinkling footfalls of the water-spirits upon the leaves, and wondering if some of them would not take a peep in at her open window, so that she might make their acquaintance. Something was surely coming to visit her out of the supernatural this time. She watched it slowly raising itself above the level of the window-sill, until she saw in the broad glare of the lightning eyes which she recognized, eyes which she thought were the most beautiful in the world, dark, commanding, lustrous eyes. They belonged to one who had been very kind to her. She could have pointed out those eyes under almost any disguise of the other features. Kindness had won her little heart to those eyes. A more sublime emotion now drew her to them—pity. So with the self-possession and ease of a princess, she held out her hand to the wonderful eyes in the flashes of the lightning, and said :

“You did promise to come and see me, Mr. Sailor, and I am so glad to see you, for I have something very important to tell you ; yes, sir, very important.”

She reached out her little hand and touched his as it lay upon the window-sill. He was amazed at her self-possession, and still more at her spiritual beauty. She was like an apparition to him.

“I thank you,” she went on, “for the poll-parrot, and for the jewelry. You are the best man for a wicked man I ever did see.”

“Am I wicked?” he said, looking carefully around, and seeing that she was indeed alone, and that the door of the room was nearly shut.

“I don't know how wicked you are. You ought to believe in God, which you don't. But never mind, they're hunting for you, and if they get hold of you they are going to choke you to death. Now I am going to keep just as still as a mouse. I won't tell one of them where you are, for they are all as bad as they say you are. They'll kill you, and if I was to help them I

would be just as wicked as they are. No, I won't tell. But you must run away and hide. But why don't you believe in God, Mr. Sailor? He's perfectly splendid."

"Perhaps I will, little one, if He is gentle and kind like you," said the man, touched by the sweetness of the child's voice, which was like gentle falls of music.

"Will you? oh, will you?" she exclaimed, holding on to his hand. "Then I will do almost anything for you."

"Don't talk so loud," he said. "You will awaken the people, and they must be so tired."

"No; I won't," she said. "I'll just whisper, for I'm awful afraid they will get after you to kill you."

"Very well," he said; "that's right; and now you eat this which I brought for you, and then I'll tell you about some more presents I've got for you."

"What is it?" she said, as he held up some long, dark object before her.

"It's a banana; the very best one I could find for you."

"Oh! you're splendid for a wicked man," she said. "I love those things dearly."

The man stripped off the peel, and gave the tropical fruit to her. She ate away at it while he whispered to her, giving her the details at great length of some colored prints of fairies and dwarfs he had bought for her. She listened eagerly, but eating away all the time at the fruit, which was an agreeable episode in her bread-and-milk life. Presently she said:

"Those books will please MacGregor, I hope."

"Certainly," he said. "I would never give you anything that he did not approve. But how do you like the banana?"

"I like it, but I am getting so sleepy, so sleepy."

She laid her head back upon the pillow, still holding on to the half-eaten fruit. She made an effort to raise herself again, but fell back. Then she closed her eyes and slept, the heavy sleep caused by a narcotic. He watched her for a moment, listened carefully, and found that the house was utterly still. Then he drew her slowly to the window, clasped her tight to his

breast, and sprang with her to the ground. Once under the shrubbery, he took a firmer hold of her, and then walked away through the rain with his white burden in his arms. He passed away under the dripping elms, his way illumined by the rapid sheets of lightning, crossed the meadow, and paused at the highway. A carriage drove up, in which he placed the sleeping child, and wrapped her up comfortably in blankets ready upon the seat. Then he sat down beside her, folded her tenderly in his strong arms, and gave to the driver, as he closed the carriage door, the order :

"Now drive like the wind. We have no time to lose."

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On the following morning many inquiries were made at Beverly for Mr. Dashwood. The festivities had continued until near daylight, and yet he had not returned from the stables. Gentlemen who sought him there were informed by the chief groom that he had suddenly been called away to a distant town, and had ridden off in the darkness, leaving word that his hour of return was uncertain. The day burst forth in splendor over the great estate, which looked fresh and green from the effect of the night rain. Gradually the ladies emerged from their apartments, breakfasts were served in various saloons for them, and still all were conscious of a great want in the palace. The genial, omnipresent, merry old host was nowhere to be seen. MacGregor, by invitation of Miss Delancy, breakfasted about noon with her and her great aunt, and Judge Hilton, of the neighboring county, in an elegant room painted in imitation of a Pompeiian villa, and with rows of slender, painted columns supporting round, Roman arches. The party were all intellectual, and the breakfast passed off with all the ease and surroundings of a dream, Miss Delancy presiding at the coffee-urn. The editor felt his love deepen upon him, and realized how hazardous it was for him to be thrown so much into the superb girl's society. His heart was yearning for tenderness, and this woman had been made for him by all the laws of affinity. He resolved to avoid her for the rest of the day. He

could not fail to discern the slight air of authority with which Marie Delancy conducted all the details of the breakfast, and issued her directions to the servant in attendance. Had she been already married to the banker she could not have presided with a greater appearance of being the mistress of the household. This confirmed him still more in his belief that she was betrothed to the master of Beverly.

After the meal was concluded, he, therefore, sought the piazza, and devoted several hours to attentions to the beautiful women, who were arranging every kind of equestrian and carriage expeditions for the afternoon. He finally joined a party on horseback who determined to ride out at the porter's gate, and meet and escort Mr. Dashwood upon his expected return. Several ladies accompanied this party, and gave additional grace and beauty to the cavalcade, by their elegant riding and the perfection of their riding habits. As this gay procession finally emerged from the woods into the valley, they heard the silver bugle, at the opposite side, which announced an arrival at Beverly. Presently they encountered a covered carriage approaching, with servants in livery. A gentleman rider informed MacGregor that it was the livery of Arthur Delancy, formerly of the manor, and that the carriage doubtless contained that gentleman and his wife. He then repeated to him the common rumor of the county, that Arthur Delancy had married a young woman of whose origin nothing definite could be ascertained. It was natural, therefore, for the journalist to endeavor to see her face as the carriage rolled past the cavalcade. He raised his hat, as did all the gentlemen on horseback, to the new guests as they passed by. A gentleman looked out of the carriage window and returned the courtesy. A lady, his wife, was his only companion. She bowed too, and smiled upon each one of the cavalcade as they filed past. When she bowed to MacGregor she became deathly pale, and he saw her confusion. He bounded to the side of the horseman who had given him the names of the new guests, and said hoarsely :

"Did you see her face? Is that woman married to him? Do you *know* it?"

"Certainly. That is Mrs. Arthur Delancy. Why do you ask? Have you ever seen her before?"

With wonderful self-mastery, the journalist said carelessly: "I have seen the face often in the city. Rather pretty, is it not?"

The gentleman rider made some comment upon the face, and then spurred on. He knew not that MacGregor had recognized his own wife, and that the woman was utterly criminal and in his power forever. She had committed the crime of bigamy. Her inordinate craving for wealth had entrapped her at last. No wonder the color fled from her face at that meeting. The man she had deserted could place her in a felon's cell. With emotions of shame and terror, she rolled on to Beverly. With indignation aroused once more, and trebled by her crime, the journalist bounded on, talking and laughing with the gay ladies to conceal his terrible thoughts. It was a fearful ride for him that afternoon, with all the burden of the old agony upon him, and with the savage thirst for revenge manifesting itself in the glare of his eyes and the nervous clutch of his hand upon the bridle. Could he have met this terrible revelation when alone, and given way to all the outward manifestations which nature has provided as safety-valves for the brain, it would have been anguish enough. But to laugh, and answer, and please gay company, when the demon tugs at the heart, this demands nerves of iron. He knew that the afternoon passed away, and that a disappointed cavalcade returned to Beverly without its master. He knew that the terrible secret had not escaped his lips. He knew that when his horse finally paused before the steps of the palace, he aided a lady to ascend to the piazza, and that she chided him for some act which indicated a weakened memory. He knew that his wife was not among the faces which looked down upon the returning cavalcade from the piazza. He knew that he had not encountered her in the halls or galleries. He knew that he was

sitting alone in his private rooms brooding over his wrongs. He knew not how fiercely he had been pacing up and down his parlor for an hour. But he knew that a great internal struggle was going on, that fierce thoughts were surging over him like the sea, that demon faces were looking at him in mockery, and that occasionally a child's beautiful and innocent face was smiling upon him from heaven, the sweet face of his dead darling. And when the exquisite face of the little dead daughter seemed to live again in the home of God, and seemed to look pleadingly towards him, a beautiful One, clothed in the sun, and bearing a cross of light, appeared beside her, and whispered to his soul, "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

The great soul of the man could not but listen to the sublime words, though the woman had blasted his whole life. He bowed his head at last, and prayed God for strength to perform a sublime act of pardon. The strength came, and he drew paper and pen to him, and wrote :

"You have wronged a true heart. You preferred gold to love. You have lost forever a heart whose tenderness you can never appreciate. Never, during your mortal life, can the ineffable tenderness come back to you. But you shall receive from me the fullness of pardon. Go in peace. I will never harm you. Your secret, which now goads you like a demon, is safe with me. I shall never recognize you, never speak to you. Live out your wretched life as you please. I forgive you. The mother of my child shall never, through my act, enter a prison. In the name of Jesus, go in peace, and may God have mercy upon your soul."

He folded the note, sealed it, and sent it away through the palace by a servant's hands to the apartments assigned to Mrs. Arthur Delancy, giving positive instructions that it must be placed directly in her hands.

When the servant returned and notified him that Mrs. Delancy had possession of the note, he was relieved, and turned to

examine a letter which had arrived by a special messenger. It was accompanied by a packet having all the appearance of a business document. He broke the letter open, and read in surprise this communication in the chirography of Mr. Dashwood :


“MACGREGOR :—You are the only man I ever really loved and trusted utterly. The secrets of this letter must never go beyond you and Miss Delancy, for they involve to a certain extent my life. Miss Marie Delancy is my granddaughter, and she knows it. By the inclosed documents I give her a large property, and make you, the trustee to manage it for her during your life. By the inclosed paper, I give to you forever, to remember your aged friend by, the grand estate of Beverly. I give you everything appertaining to it, except the jewels which I have taken away. I leave you also a sum in bank—one million of dollars. I fly to foreign lands with Dream-child, whom I have stolen from you because she is dangerous to me. Because you love her, she will be tenderly treated by me, and by my wife, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, who flies with me. Whenever you want to see the child, come to my home in St. Petersburg, where my friend the Emperor will always protect me. There alone am I utterly safe on earth. There secretly address me as Count Suarrow. You may come and take away Dream-child whenever you please. For a few months the possession of her is essential to my safety. Farewell.

“DASHWOOD.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

*"I've marked in thy glances and heard in each word
That the thoughts of the past will not sleep;
I know there are times when a voice will be heard
That doth make thee despairingly weep."*

Mary Wiley.

HEN he had opened the packet which came with the letter, he found the deed duly signed and acknowledged which transferred to him the magnificent estate of Beverly. He was independent forever, for papers transferring to him one million dollars' worth of bonds in a metropolitan bank were also in the packet. He found there too a settlement of five hundred thousand dollars in real estate and houses upon Miss Delancy, he being designated as the trustee, to manage it for her during his life. The whole matter was so utterly astounding, coming, as it did, immediately upon the heels of his wife's crime, that he was bewildered and plunged into a sea of tumultuous and conflicting thoughts. He sat with his head bowed upon his hands trying to establish order in his thoughts. Anguish and joy alternated in his soul. He was wonderfully fortunate and singularly unfortunate. Wealth had come unexpectedly to him, and also the knowledge that Marie Delancy was unfettered by an engagement. The demonstrations of affection in the old man's private retreat had been only those of grandfather and grandchild, the dead statesman coming to life, and folding to his heart the daughter of his son, Arthur. The banker was the renowned Jourdan Delancy whom rumor had buried under the sod years ago. No wonder that the old man was so familiar with Russian law, and Russian and Turkish literature. His library was supplied, no doubt, from that great empire of the north where once he had lived as the American ambassador, and had enjoyed the especial friendship of the Russian emperor. To that great monarch he had fled now, seeming to have arisen from the family vault of the proud Delancys, only to put thousands of miles between

himself and his native land. Why this haste of the resurrected sage and statesman? Why sped he away secretly and like one who scented danger? He feared to remain in America with Dream-child. He had carried her off in order to control the utterances of her lips for a time. Why? The question seemed to be answered in vivid links of evidence, which flashed into one chain in the journalist's mind. Who had feared that child's mysterious clairvoyant powers? The old sailor upon whose trail the detective was following; the old sailor who had come from the Brazils with wondrous diamonds to sell to Hall, Blue & Co.; the old sailor who had dropped the child from his lap in terror because she had been detected reading his secret thoughts; the old sailor in whose breast Dream-child had found those suspicious sentences, "*Hartwell is murdered. If I keep my mouth shut no one will ever know who did it;*" the same old sailor who had returned to Mrs. Jourdan Delancy the bag of gold, which Marie Delancy had seen in her grandmother's trunk at the time of Hartwell's murder; the same sailor who had been identified through his voice by the Jewess, as being the man who had deceived her, and carried the three Arabic studs out of her house, two of which studs had certainly once been seen upon Hartwell's shirt-bosom. And when MacGregor recalled the fact that the murder could only have been successfully perpetrated and concealed by some one familiar with the ways and windows of the old manor-house, and when he remembered how much alike were the figures of Mr. Dashwood and the sailor, he could not avoid the conclusion that the two men were identical, and were the black mask who had entered Mrs. Jourdan Delancy's private room and been seen no more. And now Mrs. Jourdan Delancy had fled away with him to Russia. Must the old lady not have been his accomplice?"

Then arose in his mind the query: If the old sailor, Trowbridge, and Dashwood and the resurrected Jourdan Delancy were one and the same person, and had, with or without the connivance of the old lady, murdered Hartwell in the old

manor-house, why had the old man become a fugitive? The late master of Beverly was an astute man, read in the law, read apparently in everything. His conversation indicated great familiarity with legal principles, and, moreover, the statesman, Jourdan Delancy, had in his day made his mark in practice at the bar. Why the necessity of his flight, then? He knew the principle of law, that without the presence of the *corpus delicti* no man could be convicted of murder. The son, Arthur Delancy, had been discharged from custody because no corpse of Hartwell could be found. Years had doubtless now eradicated all traces of the concealed body. If bones were left they must be beyond the power of identification. Why, then, had the old banker fled?

In the tumultuous whirl of his thoughts came around this poignant reflection to the journalist: Marie Delancy, the lovely girl whom he loved, was free of heart entanglements. He loved her, but he could not offer her his hand. Why? Because he had just flung aside the opportunity which would have made him a freeman. A moment ago he could have obtained a divorce *a vinculo* from his adulterous wife. He had promised her now pity, mercy, silence. By the act of forgiveness and promise of secrecy, he had sealed his own solitary doom. He could never until her death marry again, unless he broke his promise to her. A MacGregor's promise was more than a breath; it was a part of his inheritance of blood and honor from his ancestors. The irrevocable word had crossed the halls of Beverly to the apartments of the guilty woman. Torture would not wring from him now the violation of his promise. He had princely halls now, wealth, and a superb home. But through those halls never could a loving woman hang upon his arm, and call him by the manliest title on earth. No children could be born to him to satisfy the cravings of his affection, and to make those corridors alive with their happy voices. He must live alone with his own sad heart, a beggar for love in the midst of affluence and power. He bowed his beautiful head, and in the midst of his own grand Beverly, was sad, oh!

so sad and desolate. "I will go for Dream-child," he said at last. "The old man will yield my darling up to me when he is beyond the reach of harm. Yes, he will be kind to her for my sake." With, then, this single solace for his heart, he gathered to himself his powers of self-control, and strode out into the palace of which he was now sole master.

How grand it was, this airy fabric of the marvellous banker! In his hand was the deed the departing Sphinx had sent to him. With the evidence of his title in his hand, he passed along the halls and saluted the brilliant groups. Encountering at last Judge Hilton, he said :

"I have a letter from the banker, Mr. Dashwood. He will never return. His affairs call him to far-off travel. Read this deed, and then announce its contents to the guests. The jurist perused the document, narrowly examined the signature, and then exclaimed aloud: "This is a correct deed, and its transfer of property is marvellous. Ladies, gather all in the house that you can find to the piazza. Something wonderful has come from Mr. Dashwood." In a moment the palace was in an uproar. The rumor of a letter from the banker sped away through halls, and galleries, and grounds. There was the rustling of silks in the halls, and the hurried tread of men and excited voices in inquiry. All flocked at last to the piazza, and some looked down from windows upon the scene. Judge Hilton, amid profound silence, read aloud the wonderful deed. Intense amazement ensued, and a confusion of voices, as many gathered about MacGregor to take him by the hand. He was the man above all others who would have been declared elected to the ownership of the estate had the matter been submitted to a vote. He was immensely popular, and in the modesty of his heart he did not know it. The scene was one of intense excitement. There were disappointed belles who had hoped to win the hand of the old banker, who now concealed their chagrin that he was gone, and manifested new interest in the handsome journalist. But there was torture in the heart of one woman, looking down and listening from a balcony, which

seemed to be the concentrated agonies of a dozen human lives. The hour of retribution had come. The prince of intellect was now the prince of affluence and power. How superb he looked, in his manly and intellectual beauty, the new master of Beverly, surrounded by the brilliant throng who worship gold! No wonder that the woman half shrank away from the vision of the man she had wronged. To the startling agony which she had that day learned for the first time from Arthur Delancy, his transfer of his right to re-enter the old manor to another, was now added the exquisite torture of knowing that her wronged and deserted husband stood in a position of wealth and grandeur, towering above the Delancy manor, as six is above one. She saw him in the plenitude of his glory, and her wretched heart was dazzled by the poor sufferer she had betrayed. She was too ignoble in her heart to trust to his final silence regarding her crime. Not susceptible to noble impulses herself, she could not believe they existed in him. He would reveal all her crime some day, and consign her to everlasting reproach and shame. And so she cowered upon the balcony, and hell tugged at her heart, as she saw MacGregor rich, oh! so rich, her only dream of heaven. Something of the torture and the distress caused by MacGregor's changed fortunes must have been manifest in her face, for the master of Beverly, looking up to the balcony, saw her, and his noble heart was moved. The man who had not been permitted to know that his child was dying, still felt pity for the woman who had been its mother. A flush of the generous in him passed over his face, and tearing himself away from the throng, he passed on into his private rooms. For what? To make a testimonial for all time that no cruelty, no merciless torture of his heart and his pride, could ever make him mean towards one whom he had once trusted and loved. In the midst of the silence of the woman's rooms that night, where she remained afraid to meet him ere she left the estate, a servant appeared and handed her a note. To her amazement, she read in the handwriting of MacGregor these words :

"I have that now which you always deemed the first of human possessions—money. Therefore take now at parting forever this gift. I have made arrangements to settle upon you for life the income of one hundred thousand dollars, so that you may never have the apprehension of want. Farewell, until we meet before the judgment-seat of God."

In the silence of her room, and with the lights scarcely revealing her solitary form, the woman sat, and for the first time in years her eyes were wet with tears, and something like remorse pressed upon her heart. On the morrow early she ordered her carriage and fled away, Arthur Delancy accompanying her, and wondering at her singular and unseemly haste. He, too, had his own regrets, for his daughter he knew was at Beverly, and would not leave her rooms to greet him. Both left the estate with heavy hearts and in silence.

Some of the guests left day after day, and some remained; at the solicitation of the new proprietor, until the autumn winds began to howl over the mountain. Miss Delancy and her aunt went early, taking the direction of the rector's home. MacGregor had withheld from her the secret of the large property which had been left to her, and also his knowledge of her relationship to the old banker, until he could have time to reflect upon both revelations. He said to her at parting:

"Circumstances improper to be divulged now have taken Dream-child out of the country. I will come to the rector's during your visit there and make some important communications to you regarding property which the banker has secretly left in my hands for you, and which places you at ease during your life. I was his trusted and only friend. He has revealed to me in trust your relationship to him. Doubtless he has sealed your lips. At all events he has directed me to consult only with you regarding the secrets of his letter to me. Your grandmother has gone abroad with him. I shall come to the rector's soon and divulge to you important matters. Till then await me and trust to my discretion."

"He told me," she replied, "that he would intrust everything to you."

And so she left the place with her aunt, and knew not that MacGregor's wife was the woman whom she had declined to meet as her own father's second wife. They parted at the foot of the steps leading up to the piazza ; and as the carriage rolled away, the remaining guests, who looked down upon the parting, never would have imagined that two lovers were separating whose lips were sealed by high honor and religion from all words of tenderness.

Shortly after the departure of the woman he loved, the journalist sat down and penned his farewell editorial to the paper which had been chiefly built up by his powerful leaders and by his fastidious judgment. He informed the stockholders and the public that he was going abroad, and that travel would now relax the mind so long faithful to the pen. He then commenced to arrange his business affairs for a long sojourn abroad. He succeeded in leasing the palace of Beverly to an enterprising capitalist, to be used as a summer hotel in the following summer. After the guests had all gone and the autumn leaves began to fall and dance away in the wind, he closed the house and dismissed the servants. One alone was left to protect the place from harm. Silence reigned in the halls, and the hazy air of the autumn hovered dreamily over the estate. He passed away alone upon horseback through the woods and across the valley, and ascending to the temple gateway, turned to take a farewell look at the palace. There it rested still like a celestial vision, just as when his raptured gaze was first upon it, only that the hazy sunlight of the autumn made it appear a trifle more phantom-like, dreaming against the sky. "Beautiful, celestial vision !" he murmured, "a poet's heart conceived you, and a master mind made you reality." With a lingering look of pride he left his own, and riding down through the rocky pass beside the cascade, passed amid the picturesque groups of his deer, and walked his horse slowly towards the lake. The beautiful sheet of water was dreaming, too, like all else at Bev-

erly, and upon its bosom slept autumn leaves. The cascade on the island was hushed, and the miniature temples had no longer a sentinel in scarlet. Slowly paced the horse, and the poet-rider dreamed his autumn dream, and ever and anon he murmured, "Would to God Dream-child and Marie reigned here with me."

He rode through the meadows, and beside the woods, where gray squirrels were gliding amid the leafless trees, or basking on sun-flooded limbs, and passing the terraced hills, saw that the exotics had been transferred to winter-houses, and that the birds had nearly all fled to tropical homes. Only the hollow drumming of red-headed woodpeckers was heard upon the trunks of trees, the signal that the dead summer had passed to its grave. He gained at last the porter's lodge, but no liveried guards came forth to greet him. They had been dismissed to winter homes, and he dismounted to unlock the silver-barred gate between the marble elephants. With a musical clang it closed behind him. He locked it, and mounting his steed rode away. Destiny had given him wealth, but no love. Yes, one loved him, the golden-haired elf who had appeared to him out of the mysterious and the unknown. How his heart yearned now for the little one. Doubtless she was beyond the seas looking for his coming, and praying to the God of the innocent to return her MacGregor to her arms. The lady who had charge of his little country home had told him that the fairies had doubtless stolen back their child on the night of the terrible tempest. He knew that the child was still of the earth. She had been sent to fill the aching void in his heart, and no doubt she would linger among beings of flesh and blood until his early vision of the three women in Pompeiian halls was realized. How vividly came back to him that prophetic picture in the air! In his solitude, in his disappointment at the barrier between him and Marie Delancy, and in the midst of his gnawing heart-hunger, often recurred that terrible night when he paced his deserted house in the storm, and his murderous purpose was thwarted only by the sight of the third woman, upon whose brow sparkled in fire these words, "Eternal Love."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Ye who have had your footsteps tracked by this invisible and shapeless something, must know full well how it wrings the heart with anguish, how it causes 'Cimmerian darkness' to reign at high noon, how the feet must travel the pathway alone; for this grim, unsociable experience admits no human companionship, and scoffs at human sympathy—even the possibility of it. It is the inevitable foe, with whom so many are condemned to wage warfare, unaided, as they sit 'waiting—only waiting.'"—*Maria Jourdan Westmoreland.*

THE detective who had been sent to the country to "pipe" Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, with the view of ascertaining whether or not the suspected sailor held communication with her, established himself as a boarder in a house opposite to her cottage. His window commanded a good view of her front door, and from behind his window shutters he could see every one who visited her. He waited patiently for weeks, but no person answering to the figure or face which had been described to him approached her door. Whenever the old lady walked out he followed her. He noted every man, woman, or child she spoke to, and every house she entered, but nowhere did any aged person answering to the description of the old sailor appear to hold communication with her. The summer wore away, and still the patient detective watched her door, and followed at a distance her footsteps. Instructions came frequently from the principal detective who had charge of the matter in the metropolis to the effect that everything turned upon the identification of the old sailor who had been recognized in the jewelry shop by the Jewess, and that he must follow the old lady with the persistency and patience of a fox-hound. Every act of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy was therefore carefully written down and referred to every day. Her visitors were few, and her visits also. But behind those shutters always closed, lurked the keen eyes of the watcher. The summer was nearly over, and no old man had been seen to approach her, but the sleepless espionage continued, and finally a boy was sent to watch late at night while the detective slept. Two pair of eyes now divided the watch between

them, day and night. At last, in the broad light of day, an old gentleman approached the dwelling of Mrs. Delancy, rang the door-bell, and was admitted. After the lapse of an hour he reappeared and walked slowly away in the direction of the railroad depot. The man who had watched so many weeks followed him, while the boy remained behind the shutters to watch the house. The old gentleman, unconscious of being followed, made his way to the depot. Closer and closer to him came the detective, carrying a travelling-bag. He saw that the old man had long white hair falling upon his shoulders, and was in height and frame like the sailor described by the Jewess. He walked behind him until the depot was reached, and then he followed him up to the ticket office and heard him demand a ticket for New York. The money was paid down and the old gentleman thrust the ticket into the inside pocket of his coat. He passed away from the office and sat down in a chair near it, but his face was averted. The time to study his countenance had not arrived, so the detective paid his own fare, and crossing the depot to the telegraph office, wrote this despatch for the detective in the city, all the time casting glances at the back and long white hair of the old gentleman to see that he did not escape him :

"An old gentleman in black, with long white hair upon his shoulders, white straw hat, low-crowned, with a black ribbon and white silk gloves, will reach New York by next train. *Pipe* him."

He paid for the telegram, and it flashed to the metropolis. Then he crossed the depot to the place where the old gentleman still sat. The crowd of passengers waiting for the train were fast gathering about the old man, who still sat with averted face. The detective stood behind him until the signal was given to the crowd to enter the train of cars which came thundering up to the depot. Then the old gentleman arose and passed with the crowd to the cars, the detective following close behind him. The game settled into a seat, and the hunter took the seat immediately behind him. With one detective

seated behind him so close that his hand could reach the long white hair, and with another detective awaiting his arrival in the depot at New York, it seemed impossible for the old gentleman to escape final identification. If he was indeed the old sailor seen by the Jewess in the jewelry shop of Hall, Blue & Co., and concerned in the carrying off from her house of the Arabic studs ; if he had received a bag of gold from Mrs. Delancy on the fatal night ; if he had really said in his heart the words which Dream-child had ascribed to him regarding Hartwell's disappearance, then the old man was rolling on rapidly to the meeting in the depot at New York with one of the craftiest, most indefatigable and patient followers of criminals that the department of police had ever known. Once let those fatal eyes fix themselves upon the old man's countenance, and those fatal feet commence their everlasting tread behind his back, and his secret life would as surely, in time, be laid open, as the morning sun would in time rise again. They were there in the depot at New York waiting, and every second they were drawing nearer. Was there no one to warn the old man of his approaching doom as the train sped on ? Was the car hurrying him, indeed, to the gallows. Was there no heart that shuddered at the thought of that aged man, with his long white hair, being strangled to death with a rope ? The detective behind him was rapidly making headway in his profession. He was an ambitious, an aspiring officer of the law. He knew that promotion and increased pay were before him if the old sailor could be identified through his persistent watch, for so the astute detective in the depot at New York had assured him. He had a wife and children dependent upon his professional cunning. His early life had been antagonistic to the law. Now he was a faithful servant of the law, and well he knew that if the old man escaped his vigilance, after the telegram he had sent to the city, his dismissal from the secret service of the police would certainly ensue. The great detective at New York knew that he was working out one of the most mysterious criminal problems that had ever taxed his

brain. He was sitting in the city depot, with a look of professional satisfaction upon his countenance, and awaiting the shrill whistle of the approaching train, which was bringing his victim.

Must the old man die? Are not the webs of fate most mysterious? Does God order all things? Is he the weaver who fabricates the web of each man's life? Does he, when he implants in the human heart noble impulses and instincts, know that they will defeat the ends of justice? The crisis was approaching. Each reverberation of the thunder of the train was now saying: Shall it be death! Shall it be life!

Had the detective behind the old man remained in his seat until the train reached the city, with his hand within reaching distance of the long white hair, death would have had a victim at last and strangled. But the officer of the law who was rising in his profession knew that he had better take a look into the face of the old gentleman to guard against mishaps, and to be able to know him again under all disguises he might assume. The train might be wrecked, and in the confusion the old man might escape. Strange events sometimes startle human calculations, and this rising officer of the law knew that he could not know too much about the old fox he was following. So he left his seat naturally enough, and took a seat facing the old man, which had just been vacated by a passenger. Now he could see his victim, and he gave him a look, such a look that the visage of the old gentleman was printed upon his soul forever. It would be hard now for the white-haired stranger to elude him under disguises. No! it would be *very easy* now. He knew him. Wide open were flung now the gates of the past years, and memory entered to soften his soul. Old man! with your silver locks and the impress of genius upon your aged brow, you are safe. Aye! wife and children may starve, for the detective is about to lose his place. God had planted one of those strange impulses in the officer's heart which rendered it impossible for him to betray that aged man to death. His nostril quivered in his agitation, but he con-

trolled himself, and taking a letter from his pocket, with a pencil he wrote upon the back of it :

"Dear old man, Jourdan Delancy, you do not remember me. But I remember you. I am a detective upon your trail. The chief detective is awaiting your arrival in the depot at New York. Get off the train at the next station, and escape. I can't harm you. *You made them cut me down when they were torturing me at Sing Sing prison, years ago.* God bless you ; run for your life.—WILLIAM BURKE."

He passed the letter over to the old man, who read the words in pencil, started, glanced at him, handed him back the letter, and said in his ear : "You are one in a million. I will see that you are taken care off."

"No," whispered back the man, "my heart won't let me take pay for this. Don't talk to me any more, but change your seat, and fly at the next station ! Go ! and may God protect you."

The officer immediately left his seat and passed into the adjacent car that he might not see the old man leave the train, which was now signalling the approach to a station. Who implanted gratitude in the human heart ? Casuists, may a man betray his trust ?

MacGregor found it no easy matter to transact business with Miss Delancy, and retain that control over his looks and words which religion, honor, and conscience dictated. In order to carry out the wishes of the departed banker and fulfil all the obligations of the trust, it was necessary to consult with the young *cestui que trust*. He met her first at the house of the rector, and divulged the secret creation of the trust-estate, and such other matters contained in the banker's letter as he deemed prudent to disclose. Much time was necessarily consumed with her alone in the rector's study, arranging plans for her future residence in one of the many houses left for her benefit by her grandfather, and settling upon the character of

the investments of money he was directed to make with her written assent. She knew that he loved her, and was striving like a hero to conceal all outward manifestations of his passion. She loved him, but by no word or look did she betray it, for she was strong, at least she believed so. But fate was bringing them into dangerous proximity. Their words were unconsciously low and gentle to each other. With half-averted face he listened to and advised with her, but she thought his business remarks the sweetest music on earth. Never before had deeds, and leases, and insurance, and rents, and taxes, seemed such melodious words to her. Business had passed through a singular transformation and became for her synonymous with pleasure. And so they lingered together, and their business transactions became almost interminable. But vigilance was ever at the man's heart, and his words and acts beyond reproach. But one day, when he announced to her at the rector's that he was satisfied now that he had done his duty as to all the preliminaries of the trust estate, and that he should go abroad, leaving his agent to pay to her the rents and income of the property as they became due, he saw that her lip quivered, and that she was struggling with some hidden emotion. She tried to bid him farewell, but nature was too strong for art. The great Atlantic would soon roll its wide expanse of waves between them. Perhaps they might never meet again on earth. The weary years would drag themselves along, till old age and the grave approached, and they might lie as mouldering skeletons in far apart hemispheres. Could she let him go away alone in all the reticence and the agony of hopeless love, this great, strong, honorable man, who would pass through fire before his lips would unseal again to whisper of his hopeless love? She, too, had stood beside the altar of principle, and for months fed the sacred fire out of her very heart's blood. She had wept and prayed in silence. She had approached the communion-table in public, and her rector, who knew all, had not debarred her. He knew the great, pure, martyr-like character of the girl, and that her acts were those which she daily presented to,

God, and that she was beyond reproach. It seemed now, however, as if the agony which tugged at her heart-strings would break forth into words at this last, perhaps this eternal parting. But no! the fine gold had no dross, and the quivering lip grew still, and she smiled upon him as she bade him farewell. He passed away from her, carrying the message she had sent to the far-off Dream-child. He felt as if the knell was already sounding for his funeral, as he passed out from the house and stepped upon the lawn. She drew aside the curtain and looked after him. Yes, he was going, and she fell down upon the floor in her agony, and her face rested against the sofa. "Gone forever, oh God! gone forever. Have mercy upon me, oh my God! have mercy!"

Hush! agonized heart. A voice, familiar and dear, is in the hall. Trouble has obscured, not obliterated, the impulses of the heart. Some one is coming to raise the drooping form and clasp it tightly.

The patrician arose to her feet, for footsteps were heard in the hall. The door opened, and Arthur Delancy stood before his daughter.

"Marie," he said, "you were right and I was wrong. The woman is dead and buried. Will you not come back to your father's heart?"

The words were those both of death and of life. The woman was dead, but the father had come to life. She came forward, and her father took her to his heart. She had always belonged there. It was something to have received back a father when the great idol of her life had fled. The rector came in behind him and greeted him a second time. They had met in the grounds. Again some one darkened the door. Arthur Delancy turned, and, with the elegance which had ever characterized him in society, exclaimed:

"Ah! Mr. MacGregor, I am glad to see you so soon again. Your name is a passport in every cultivated circle."

The two had been introduced by the rector only a minute before. At this third vision Marie Delancy gazed in wonder,

for his face was full of light. Joy was as unmistakable there as intellectuality. What tidings had come to him? And why had he turned back? Surely he could not have strength to face a second parting such as they had both experienced a moment before. Why had the strong turned back again to face the weak? She only learned that MacGregor had accepted the invitation of the rector to return and dine with Arthur Delancy. But the face of the man was radiant. Never before had his brilliant eyes sparkled with such intelligence and joy. His powers of utterance seemed to be utterly unshackled; and Arthur Delancy turned to him at length as to a congenial spirit. The dinner that followed was enlivened entirely by his wit and that which it elicited. Among the cultured he was the leader, by that magnetism which proclaims the chief. Equally acquainted with the elegant and the profound paths of science, and that not superficially but thoroughly, he touched upon every subject introduced by his companions at dinner, modestly, but with wonderful appreciation and effect. And all through the entertainment Miss Delancy, sitting opposite to him in all his wonderful beauty and matchless grace, was conscious that some great joy had settled upon him. But what it was she could not fathom.

When the dinner was over they all withdrew to the parlor; and then Arthur Delancy took his leave, after making some arrangements with Marie regarding her future residence. The secret of her grandfather, and of her private property, were of course withheld by the two who never betrayed a trust. It happened at last that MacGregor was left alone with Miss Delancy in the parlor. The night was coming on, and he manifested no intention of leaving. She was happy in his society at the same time that she feared it. In rambling discourse the two conversed, until the evening shadows made the room almost dark. Then he said:

"I must, before I go abroad, revert to a subject which you will remember. I mean the letter I wrote you when I left you and relieved you of the custody of Dream-child."

The heart of Miss Delancy seemed to stop its pulsations. He was boldly entering the forbidden ground.

"I remember," she said. Then she paused; and only the fire was heard upon the hearth.

"Did you exonerate me from all blame in the matter?" he said, at length.

"Entirely," was her reply.

"Honor is still the crystal shield of your heart."

Never had her voice appeared so calm and sweet to him. He could only see her face now by the firelight. It was very lovely, but wore a puzzled expression.

"Everything is changed now," he said. "My wife is dead. I can speak freely out of my heart. I love you; and before I go abroad I offer you my heart and hand. Will you, can you accept them, and make me utterly happy for life?"

The revulsion of feeling, from anxiety and self-control to perfect joy, was overpowering. She could not speak, and she thought a choir of angels were singing in the air, so utterly happy was she in an instant. She laid her fair hand in his, and bowed her head low.

And when the stars came out the little hand nestled there still, and the night was holy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

*"Sleep on, brave men, nor heed the rush of worlds;
Nor taunt, nor tears can move your lips to speak,
Nor hearts to beat; but if your spirits turn
With tenderness to those who mourn your loss,
Accept this tribute from a woman's hand."*

J. M. Porter Henry.

IN a palatial mansion in St. Petersburg a group of persons were gathered about a great arm-chair, in which sat an aged invalid. It was Jourdan Delancy who occupied the chair, and was the cynosure for all eyes. The false

white hair which he had so long worn was cast aside. The white beard was also wanting. His head was nearly bald, a thin circle of long gray hair alone encompassing the smooth crown. He was closely shaven, so that the square, rigid contour of his face was manifest. His mouth had even, in his great age, the firm lines which indicated the inflexible will that had always made him master of fate and carried him through dangers and hardships that would have deterred most men. His dark-brown eyes, clear and penetrating, were now deep-set under the massive brows which proclaimed him, beyond all dispute, one of the brilliant princes of thought. To the dark complexion, which had ever pointed out the French trace of blood in his English veins, sickness had now given a pale-yellow hue. He had caused his friends to clothe him once more in the garb which had been his taste when the world knew him as a leader of men, when his powerful voice had commanded attention in the Senate and the camp. His dark velvet coat was lined and collared with sables, and on the broad ruffle of the shirt-bosom glistened a diamond as large as the Sancy in the sword-hilt of the dying Charles le Téméraire. He was a profound aristocrat. The venerable countenance, intellectual and patrician, seemed to repose in the consciousness of his high descent. When an acknowledged leader, polemical or political, men had always looked up to him with certainty, knowing that he would scorn to betray those who had a right to trust him.

In the fullness of his years and his intellectuality, he had seemed to have gone down to death. But here he was again, regal in his wealth, honored by a potentate whose respect he had gained years ago by his courtesy and diplomatic abilities, and surrounded by relatives who had come to see him die in earnest this time. Behind his chair the grim monarch was surely standing now with his scythe. But into that heart, so fearless, and into that brain so unclouded by age, death could not find a crevice to wedge in an apprehension. The old statesman knew that he was dying, but his philosophy of existence would not bend.

"Listen!" he said to MacGregor, who sat on one side holding his right hand, while on the other his granddaughter, Mrs. Marie MacGregor, stood with her arm about his neck, Dream-child and Mrs. Delancy crouching upon cushions at his feet :

"If my intellect should at your entreaties ignore its faculties of reasoning, with what contempt would you after my death look back upon my memory. I tell you that observation, during a long life, has satisfied me that matter dissolves only to live again in other forms. My observation has convinced me that these new forms are not existent in another sphere, but spring to life in this sphere, and so continue dissolving and reappearing here age after age. * And you would have me ignore these facts and believe that what dissolves in this sphere by a sudden violation of natural laws departs from this sphere and springs to a new life outside of it. No, no, that is not in accordance with scientific observation. If I, the mouldering Delancy, live again, it will be here, and in accordance with the laws of dissolution and recreation which attach to matter here. My position is the position of analogy and fact under my eyes. Your assumption of a transplanting to another sphere is not sustained by any observation of laws that I ever made, and I have watched natural laws many years.

"No, MacGregor, at this great parting I assure you that my views are scientific and yours poetic. The stubborn fact is, that matter decays and lives again in other forms here. This aged, worn-out body, will not be snatched away from the natural order of events here, but will in time, and by the operation of fixed and unalterable law, assume a new form or forms, and arise above the surface of the ground here. In time you all will join me in the chemical mould, and perhaps we may all arise above the surface again in proximity. Perchance I shall be a grand old tree, and my great arms shall fan the grass and leaves in the sweep of the tempest. It may be that you shall, in like guise, stand near me and hold converse, for I assure you that at times the trees seem to me to bow, and sigh, and talk with each other. Doubtless my wife and your wife there will be of the nature of

graceful shrubbery, swaying and drooping in the breeze, while Dream-child is a pencil of sunbeams stealing in beauty amid us all."

The voice faltered, and the aged head drooped, and when they raised the intellectual face and looked at it again, the old man had gone upon the last journey.

To the custody of MacGregor came all of the old man's papers upon his decease. The will divided all his treasure in diamonds between the following persons: The Emperor of Russia, Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, Arthur Delancy, Mrs. Marie MacGregor and her husband. But the man who had saved him from the chief detective in New York was not mentioned in the will, for he had been provided for by the old man's act before his death. The ex-editor alone was intrusted with the secret papers which contained the record of Jourdan Delancy's life. From these he learned that Mrs. Delancy knew nothing of her husband's crimes. The bag of gold, flung to him from the window of the manor-house, on the night of Hartwell's disappearance, was obtained by her to enable him to leave the premises, when the family were forced by law to vacate the manor. She did not know that he had murdered Hartwell, that he was the black mask which had looked in at her door, nor that he had carried off a long white bag and flung it into the river. She only knew that several years before, her husband had informed her that he was in great danger from his enemies, and to escape them he must erect an addition to the manor-house, with certain secret chambers therein, where he could live concealed until safer times. She had, at his urgent request, connived at his false death and hurried funeral, and had afterwards provided him with food secretly, by a door leading from her private apartments. But the murder of Hartwell was as much a mystery to her as to any member of the household. Jourdan Delancy enjoined upon his executor, MacGregor, the propriety of concealing forever from the family all information which came to him from the secret papers. At this day the mystery

to the Delancy family is as great and unfathomable as when the public press were exercised concerning the escape of Arthur Delancy from death, under the construction by the courts of the principle, "no *corpus delicti*—no conviction for murder."

But MacGregor, when opportunity and leisure came to him, and when finally Arthur Delancy had re-entered the manor by consent of his mother, after the seven years' limitation had expired, requested and obtained permission from Delancy to occupy for a time the apartments once set apart in the old manor-house for the exclusive use of the old lady. There he found no difficulty in hunting out, by the aid of the secret papers, the private door which opened into the hidden rooms of the old man from Mrs. Jourdan Delancy's apartments. He found that two comfortable though small chambers were adroitly concealed in the first and second floors of the addition, and that these communicated by a secret stairway with a room adjacent to Arthur Delancy's study. Into this room had Hartwell's body been dragged through a movable panel after he was slain. His body had finally been conveyed away to the stables by an underground passage, terminating in the old ice-house of the manor. The secret papers informed him that Jourdan Delancy had constructed this addition with especial reference to entrapping and murdering Hartwell, when he should enter the manor-house. The motive for making away with the new proprietor of the manor was, that Hartwell had used his knowledge of Delancy's murder of the Hebrew banker to extort a lease of the manor for life. Hence, Jourdan Delancy had built the addition, and feigned death to entrap him upon his return from abroad. Through these papers was derived also information that Hartwell and Delancy had both been in communication with the Hebrew banker, in efforts to form a copartnership with him to explore the Para River by the talisman of the map and the Arabic studs. An interview was had at night with the banker near the manor gate. The Hebrew, who had agreed formerly upon a sum of money, for which he would admit Delancy and Hartwell to a participation in the

venture, had at this interview, and after the money had been paid him without any vouchers in return, refused to be bound by the agreement unless more money was paid over. A violent altercation ensued, the banker struck Delancy and was immediately slain. The proprietor of the manor fled away, not, however, until he had possessed himself of the Hebrew's map. Hartwell, more crafty, and cooler in his movements, saw at once his advantage. He knew that Delancy was now in his power, and that he could wring from him the map or its equivalent in money. He remained by the body and groped about the person of the dead man for the Arabic studs. Two of them he found, the other had been displaced, and lost in the combat. Hearing approaching footsteps, he fled too, and the clergyman, when he arrived upon the scene, found the third Arabic stud, without which the map and the other studs were valueless. After the first excitement of the murder had passed over, Hartwell demanded a life lease of the manor as the guaranty of his silence. Delancy submitted to the extortion, and patiently laid his plans for revenge, and for the recovery of the studs, which he was satisfied Hartwell had taken from the body, as no account of them could be had. The detective, who was finally put upon the trail of the murderer of the Hebrew by the clergyman, had been right in his assumption that the man who had visited and deceived Miss Ettinger must have gained his knowledge of the single stud and of the detective's vigilance through the thoughtlessness or complicity of Mrs. Jourdan Delancy, who was the only person unpledged to silence, and had her information of the detective's movement through her grandchild, Marie Delancy. The old lady had communicated to her concealed husband these facts derived from her granddaughter. Hence the ease and adroitness with which he gained possession of the third stud, and joined it to the two which he had taken from the shirt-bosom of the murdered Hartwell. With the map and the three studs now in his possession, he was master of all the knowledge which the Hebrew had possessed, and which he had so craftily used to extort money from Delancy and Hartwell.

But it required an indomitable will like Jourdan Delancy's to put this occult knowledge to the test. His arm had always been like iron. Old age had only seemed to develop his wonderful elastic muscularity. He determined upon the solitary expedition, knowing, that if successful, there would be no rival partner to harass and mar the joy of his triumph. Alone he endured the ordeal, and alone he emerged from the pathless wilderness, with a fortune in his fur bag. His triumph over men and over the intellect would have been perfect in time, had not he encountered a novel and mysterious power in the person of Dream-child. The child was very dear to him, and fascinated him. But he feared that strange clairvoyant power in a land so remote from the rule and protection of the great monarch who loved him. Perfect peace and safety for him were alone to be found in Russia.

But in his secret papers he left to MacGregor a wonderful legacy of information regarding the upper waters of the Para River. The world had been long conversant with the diamond fields of Brazil, but the real wealth of that vast empire still lay hidden from the gaze of civilization, and was known only to the adventurous Hebrew who made the map. Jourdan Delancy had emerged from that fearful wilderness, with a handful of the treasure which nature had poured out upon the barren islands. That handful was a wondrous fortune in itself. But in the secret papers the old man assured MacGregor that the gravel islands and the *sloping cascalho* were nothing but sheets of diamond pebbles encrusted with the drift clay. A single washing brought out glittering brilliants of the first water. He had brought away only the largest stones he could find, and dared not attempt to bring out a heavier load for fear the weight, added to the hardships and perils of the wilderness, would cause him to break down and perish on the arduous journey out. He had, however, brought to commerce millions of dollars' worth of diamonds, some of which rivalled in size the famous stones known as the "White Diamond," the "Rajah Matara," the "Grand Mogul," the "Regent of France," the "White Bril-

liant," the "Orloff," the "Lisbon Diamond," the "Austrian," the "Piggott," the "Massal," the "Shah," and forty yellow diamonds, each the weight of the renowned "Sancy."

By the provisions of his will, the body of Jourdan Delancy was embalmed, and secretly transported to the family vault on the old manor, after the expiration of Hartwell's lease for life, as defined by the State law.

"It is my firm belief," he said, "that I shall next reappear as a tree, and it becomes my heirs and legatees, out of deference to the scientific views of an old scholar who loved them all, to place me in soil where I may sprout from the earth in company with my great ancestors, and as majestic trees move our arms in benediction over the plains and valleys which we roamed in youth, and which we loved so well."

At the hour of midnight, in the month of September, and amid darkness as impenetrable as that of Tartarus, some ominous weight was moving across the fields of the old manor of Delancy. A single lantern moved before it, revealing a coffin shrouded by a pall, and two mourners, men, pacing slowly beside it. A single horse drew the wagon towards the vault, and no word was spoken. Amid the gloom of the midnight, the pageant wound its way over hill and plain. There was no emblem of faith, no cross, no crown upon the breast of the sleeper. No minister of the Christian sects was there, no prayer to be muttered, no hope of a resurrection of the body, no expectation of a ransomed soul in Heaven. It was only dust returning to dust, matter to matter, a sceptic to mother-earth. Something of the horror of the dead man's belief seemed to bear upon the spirits of the midnight walkers. With bowed heads, they passed on in the gloom, and paused at length before the vault of the Delancy family. The great iron door swung back, and the chill air of the vault met the bearers as they lifted the coffin to its last resting-place. Then the door was closed, and the pageant dissolved and scattered to avoid observation. Before the vault,

for a time, remained Arthur Delancy, and his son-in-law, Mac-Gregor.

They communed upon the strange character of the man who was no more, and with their settled convictions of the truth and sublimity of the Christian faith, they spoke fearfully of the future of the spirit. And while they talked low in the midnight the deep voices of the heavens muttered. The thunder boomed sullenly in the distance in unison with their forebodings. A storm of wrath was coming. Fitfully glared the lightning far away, and the detonations of the thunder grew more appalling. As they moved away towards the manor-house, the storm swept onward, and the black clouds dropped arrows of fire. Suddenly, with a fearful crash, fell the lightning upon the summit of a mountain, and all was gloom again. Presently a light flared up high away towards the clouds. It widened and glared away higher and higher, the devouring flame growing bolder and stronger each instant with the food it fed upon, until at length it burst in fiery torrents over the entire shoulder of the mountain. In the horrible darkness of the storm, it was a sublime and fearful spectacle, and the eyes of men were riveted upon it, for it seemed the vengeance of an offended Deity. In volumes of leaping fire, and crested with a wilderness of flying sparks, the great, the lofty, the magnificent conception of the human intellect passed forever from the view of men. *Beverly* was illumined for the last time.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

*"If you love me, if you trust me,
Erring, human, as you see,
Give your honor to my keeping,
As I give my own to thee.*

*"Our souls are God's, not ours—
My heart is all I bring;
Lift me higher, royal lover;
I crown thee—O my king!"*



HERE is a publisher, renowned in the metropolis, whose talent is equalled by his taste. From nothing he has raised himself to affluence and fame. An admirable man of business, he at the same time is dilettante and artist. His discrimination is as fine, when passing upon a literary *jeu d'esprit* as upon a ponderous manuscript of history, when viewing a landscape garden, as when appreciating a bandeau of amethysts. Into every detail of business he carries his exquisite taste. No marvel, then, that the refined and the cultured of both sexes find a congenial sphere in his society, and take delight in supplying their literary larders from his shelves. He has attained his present eminence by his incessant application to business, and by his quick discernment in ministering to the literary wants of the *élite*. Study, travel, and intercourse with the *beau monde*, have perfected his taste and liberalized his judgment. The *cortège* of elegant readers who daily enter his publishing house find themselves in a hall, recalling vividly memories of the superb Pompeii. Slender columns, painted in brilliant and neutral tints, like classical sentinels, challenge all intruders to pay the homage of memory to the city of ashes. On the ceiling the hues and patterns of the buried city are traced, and even the lamps, pendent from above, are of the graceful forms which crowd the cases of the museum at Naples. Order, symmetry, beauty, books, bronzes, and all the richness and taste of the stationer's art are here arrayed; and while rivalry continues to be the characteristic of the publishing

fraternity, this literary caterer will be the favorite of the *crème de la crème*. *Palmarum qui meruit ferat.*

To this renowned publishing house did MacGregor turn his steps when time had settled his destiny, matrimonial, financial, and literary. Affluence was his, and the *littérateur's* dream a loving wife and a comfortable library for literary work. Knowing full well that true and permanent happiness depends upon the routine of daily physical or mental labor, he had not suffered his powers to stagnate. He had purchased outright the newspaper which once he had edited, and now devoted hours every day to editorials written in the interest of good laws, of order, and of public morality. He felt that now, with increased powers for good, the Deity, whom he adored, had just demands on his literary labor. Of all the sweet homes in the great city MacGregor's was the happiest and the noblest. Here, tenderness, consideration, perfect trust, and God, reigned. The graceful woman who was queen there had but one model—the Christian wife. Made for the man she claimed no sovereignty, but was proud to be second to him, knowing that thus all honor, all trust, all tender affection would be given her. When the returning man at night passed the portals of his home, there was rest for his tired brain, a low, sweet voice to thrill the heart, and a cultured intellect to look with him through all the exquisite vistas of poetry, and literature, and song. And as the days sped by, the tendrils of his heart, which had reached forth so timidly from the scars of his desolate past, found that what they clung to was strong. Then they too strengthened, and his pristine trust in woman returned, and she became to him a true angel of the home.

But so firmly did visions of the future impress themselves upon his memory, and become to him as realities, that a certain unrest at times beset him, and when he shook it off it returned again with renewed power. But the revelation, which was surely in his judgment to come, did come. When at the request of a young authoress he entered the great publication


house of the metropolis to procure a copy of her book to review in his paper, a startling spectacle was before him. The vision flashed upon him again, after the lapse of years, as clearly as in the terrible night of the storm, when nature and his soul were both wild in their agony. Now, now would the riddle be solved for all time, for all eternity. What he had craved was the deathless. Any other love to him would have been as valueless as the shifting sand of the desert, or the spray of the waterfall. To be loved utterly, without stint, and through every adversity, until the jaws of death locked upon him, this, this love alone could satisfy a great heart. And so he stood breathless at the entrance and saw the Pompeiian walls around him, and something of the old agony of desertion commenced its merciless cramp upon his heart, and he saw that he was indeed alone. But the classical walls ; they were there, and never before had he seen them but in the vision. See ! the development comes rapidly on. Out of the sunlight which poured in at a window, three figures were approaching, and his heart stood still. One was a poetess of the sunny South, whose brow, long since, the people have crowned with laurel. Another was an authoress of the North, whose scintillations through the press have brightened many homes, and over all the land she is known and loved over the *nom de plume* of "Sparkle." Ah ! the third comes forward with them, tall, graceful, and with the majestic elegance of a queen. The face is half averted, and yet recognition steals upon his beating heart. So do we know that the silver moon will soon face us though the cloud intervenes. Was he dreaming this beautiful dream of *eternal love* a second time, the dream which has haunted the lives of the poets and sages, or was it a living, breathing reality ? Slowly the face turned upon him, a face of exquisite loveliness, and then a smile, so sweet, and a glance of love, so deep, glorified the countenance, that he saw the truth, and his heart exulted in final fruition. She came to him then and placed in his hand a volume, on which he read, in scarlet letters, "Eternal Love." The look she gave out of

her matchless eyes told him that the title of the book and her love for him were in everlasting accord. It was his own sweet wife, Marie MacGregor.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

*"And thus I give thee up, my child, my life,
To the great God who lent thee. Go and be
Tended by angels in the land where pain
Comes not to rack the brain; from angel lips
Of loveliest music, angel eyes and brows,
Divinely calm with love and bright with thought,
Learn the deep lore of heaven."*

Mary E. Bryan.

 HE dissolution of intimacy between the two beings she loved best on earth had been a constant source of inquiry and of speculation to Dream-child. Knowing that MacGregor and her beloved "Tooty" were happy in each other's society, and that her beautiful adopted father never manifested such elasticity of spirits and of conversation as when in the parlor of the boarding-house he communed with the singer after the daily music-lesson was over, she could not comprehend the sudden flight. "Why didn't you stay with Tooty if you loved her?" was the oft-repeated question. The little elf never could draw out from him a satisfactory answer, and finally she ceased her interrogatories, and mused upon the subject in silence. Her intimacy with both had given her a perfect knowledge of the fact that they loved each other. But never had MacGregor deemed it advisable to attempt to explain to her the theological, moral, and conventional reasons why two people who loved should fly in opposite directions. He would fain have allowed the name of "Tooty" to disappear from their conversations altogether. But this the child would not allow. "You are all the time thinking about her," she said, "and so you might just as well talk about her."

Finally the journalist seemed to acquiesce in the child's conclusion that in time Tooty and himself might come together again. To that bright future the wonderfully precocious little heart was now ever looking, for she saw that her father was silent and unhappy since he had parted from the singer. By every winning art of childhood did she seek to compensate him for his loss. She seemed to realize fully the mission upon which God had sent her to his desolate heart. She chattered to him incessantly about all those trifles in nature, and art, and poetry, which she discovered to be his idiosyncrasies, and he found that the little one was becoming an indispensable adjunct of his country life. She roved everywhere with him, by brook or forest, and learned by heart his favorite quotations, which sometimes she applied with startling pertinency to objects they encountered in their strolls. At other times she seemed to become utterly identified with the music which was taught her by the birds. He would hear her, alone, when seated in her little chair under the elms, suddenly catch the inspiration of song from the birds which perched overhead, and for moments she would imitate them so perfectly that they would pause to listen, and then gathering courage, would warble away in wilder delight at the new songster they fancied had fluttered to their haunts. At other times she would sit at the piano, and with her golden wavy cloud of hair falling like a mantle over her sylph-like form, would play those dreamy symphonies, which the great masters of song have left as evidence of the links between earth and the spiritual life. Every prediction of Miss Delancy regarding her musical gifts was being monthly more than realized. The child learned with marvellous facility. Her touch at times upon the instrument was so exquisite that it seemed as if a celestial had fluttered down to guide her little hand, and MacGregor, overpowered by the sweetness of the melody, would come to her, and kneel beside her, and kiss her dimpled hand, so utterly a slave was he to the witchery of her music. And then the lustrous eyes would turn upon him in tenderness and rapture that she could make him forget pain

and anguish. A smile of heavenly sweetness would pass over her face, and she would nestle close to him as if she possessed all the fulness of a woman's idolatry and knew that the lonely man needed the tenderness of contact.

At times he feared that he would lose her. When the sun flooded all things with its effulgence, and the millions of glittering motes seemed to tremble in the air, she would whirl away from his arms into the pencils of rays, and dance, such an ethereal, golden, noiseless dance, that it seemed to be the waltz of a disembodied spirit. Over her showered the sun's rays, and as she whirled, it seemed difficult to tell whether she was crowned and mantled with golden hair or golden sunbeams, for the flossy hair and the light seemed to blend and alternate with each other. For the moment she would seem to have dissolved into sunlight, but rubbing his eyes he would see her reappear and advance toward him, smiling her childish, heavenly smile, and pushing back with her slender hand the wealth of her waving hair. She was an ever-present mystery to him, for with all the traits and perfections of precocious and innocent girlhood, she moved upon the mystic border of the supernatural ever. Everything beautiful and purifying in the Christian faith Dream-child drank in with avidity. Everything discordant to the ideal Christ she rejected with the quickness and purity of the saint. Hence her influence upon MacGregor, unconsciously to him, became potent for good. That which contact with the world rendered hard and unfeeling, her gentle voice and gentle suggestions melted. He could not wander far in the mazes of infidel or Christian sophistry with such an exquisite lover of Jesus close beside him. The little one had the spirit of the truth, and the letter of revelation could not lead him far from gentleness, mercy, and forgiveness. She blended her purity into his life, and he realized, at length, the mercy of God in sending her, when all the love of womankind was denied to him. And so he pressed the youthful loveliness closer to his heart, and she became his sole companion in the meadows and woods of his country home.

Then came the great tribulation, and Dream-child was carried away from him by night. It was a terrible pang to him, this abduction of his darling by his aged friend. But so munificently and so grandly had Dashwood provided for him out of his fabulous wealth, that he could not and would not doubt that the man's necessities and life alone caused him to strain so hard upon the *cordon* of friendship. The aged banker had inspired him with trust, and MacGregor would sacrifice much for a friend. His trust was not misplaced, as the result proved. In the Russian capital he received back Dream-child, and a still more princely inheritance from the dying banker and statesman. Now came the heaven of Dream-child's mysterious existence. Upon her startled presence in the family of Jourdan Delancy, at the capital of Russia, came the two beings she loved, united and happy. She would sit for hours between these married lovers and laugh in childish glee to witness their perfect joy. She noted every look they gave each other, and stealing close to them as they talked, she read the bright page of their inner life, which none but themselves knew in its perfection. She saw that no longer was she a necessity of her beloved MacGregor's life. Her mission was fulfilled. She had entered the cold, gloomy cavern of his desolate heart and lighted it by her angelic presence, until the real angel of his life took the torch lighted at the altar of marriage and walked into his heart as an eternal brightness. And when she saw that he was happy, that the tender, the poetic, the intellectual in him had found their true mate, her powers seemed to have attained their utmost development, and MacGregor and his queenly wife would sit side by side, and hand in hand, in hushed amazement, to hear the wondrous child mount the ladder of song. Ecstasy, such as we may fancy the blest enjoy when listening first to the music of the celestial choir whose realm they have entered, filled the hearts of the listeners at the power of Dream-child's voice. Up, up to God, and purity, and beatitude it seemed to mount, and warn the newly married pair that perfect peace could be found only in the hope of a blessed immortality.

When the returning party sought once more their native land, Dream-child came with them. On the bosom of the sea she sat with them and studied the stars, happy in their joy and peaceful in their peace. On the hushed nights, when the winds slept and the wondrous moon gleamed along its ocean path, the little charmer lifted her voice again to the sky; and as the sweetness of her songs rose and fell in cadences along the deep, the hardy sailors listened and wondered as if the queen of the watery realm had come to honor her followers. With half-terrified looks they saw her in her robe of white, and her wondrous mantle of hair, singing to the stars while the ocean slept. In the sunbeams, too, these veterans of the deep saw her dance that weird, swift, sunlight dance, which seemed more the rapid whirl of a spirit than the steps of a mortal child. They shook their heads at the words of the elf who came and talked caressingly to them; and when she left them at last for the land, they wept that they could see the vision of her loveliness no more.

At last there came home, the home of her MacGregor and his wife. The presence of the strange child still brought joy and music; and when, every evening upon the steps, the wife greeted the returning husband, the laughing elf was beside her with her lustrous, tender eyes of greeting too. And so into the lives of the two she now blended; and wherever the journalist and his wife were happy, there was Dream-child happy too.

One day the child chanced to hear MacGregor say that now his earthly happiness was at its height; for the realization of the vision of the three female figures within Pompeiian walls had established the certainty that his wife was the impersonation of "Eternal Love" for him. At these words she turned and gave him a look of her magnetic eyes, so full of meaning, that he started.

"Do you comprehend the full meaning of what I was saying to Tooty?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, approaching him with beaming eyes. "MacGregor and Tooty will sit forever with God."

He kissed the child upon her forehead at this response, and Marie MacGregor put her arm around her in tender affection. But at this instant the sun, which had for a moment passed behind a cloud, burst forth with startling brilliancy, and away whirled Dream-child into the bright spot where the rays were centred on the carpet for a dance. They watched her as she turned in the brightness, her eyes beaming with joy, her hair flying out from her in the motion of the dance, and encompassing her like a mist of gold. Seeing that they watched her, she laughed merrily and danced more excitedly than before. In and out of the sunbeams she seemed to weave herself, until they knew not the light from the gold of her hair. Seeing her merry mood, Marie MacGregor opened the piano and played a waltz to time her steps. Now the little dancer became wild with joy, fast and faster flew her steps, more weirdly blended her floating hair with the sunbeams, but not a sound of her feet was heard upon the carpet. Only her smile came at intervals from the bright circle of light, to indicate the height of her felicity. More vehemently poured in the rays of the sun. The effulgence of midday was at hand. MacGregor watched her movements in the dance with wonder. Once she seemed to be dissolving in the sun. But no, she reappeared again and laughed her merry, joyous, ringing laugh, and he turned away to join his wife at the piano. Merrily, dizzily, inspiringly, went on the melody of the waltz, but when he turned to look at the little dancer again she was gone.

"Marie, my darling ! Where is Dream-child ? Look ? "

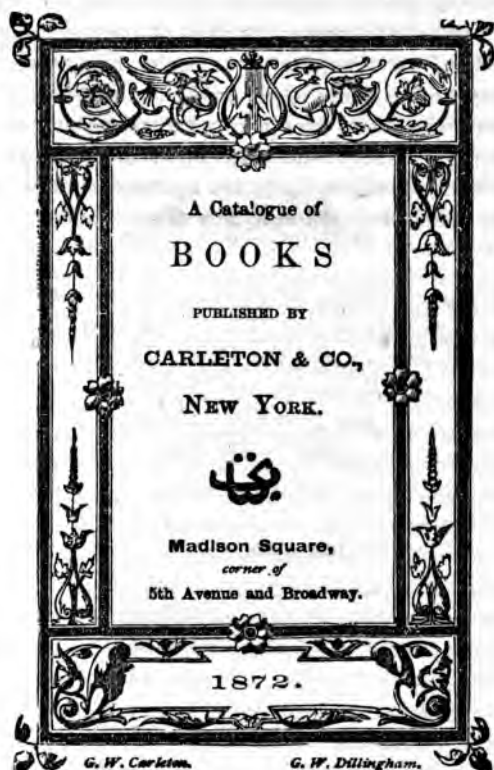
Some unusual and startling significance was in his tones, for the wife ceased instantly her playing, and turned to the sunlight. The child was not there. The pencils of rays streamed in at the window, and in them countless motes floated ; but the whirling mass of golden hair was no longer there. Perhaps she had darted out through the open door, so noiseless was ever her footfall, and so evanescent her whims. They looked into

the adjoining room, and then through the hall, but no child could be found. Then they searched the house for her high and low ; and they even went out upon the street and looked up and down. All was vain effort : they never saw Dream-child again. It was only after the incessant advertisement and search of a year, that MacGregor folded his hands and gave up the search. To him the matter had but one solution ; and his final explanation he communicated to his wife alone. Belief in the supernatural is the result of mental organization. Some persons believe readily, some with great hesitation and difficulty, and some never at all. If responsibility inevitably attaches to a human being's belief or disbelief in supernatural occurrences, doubtless a wise and just Deity will regulate the punishments of the hereafter, according to the mental calibre and susceptibility of belief in that which transcends natural laws.

One class of minds will be satisfied with the solution of the mystery of Dream-child's disappearance, which assigns a natural and common cause for a child's loss. She passed rapidly into the street, and was stolen or fled away. Another class will refresh their memories with the instances of Holy Scripture, where God sent angels upon especial missions to save or aid men. The child was sent out of the Spirit-land to soothe and save a deserted and powerful intellect from madness and violence. But whatever solution either class settle upon at last, MacGregor knew that the child had saved him. Out of the bosom of the Infinite she had seemed to come to him in the hour of his mental peril and his heart-agony. He had prayed earnestly to the God of the desolate : " Oh, God ! who hast made me with a yearning nature, send me some companion to satisfy this tenderness and reaching forth of a father's heart." The prayer was answered ; and looking up, the child in all her loveliness stood before him. If of the supernatural, well. If of the natural, well, also. The same result was attained. The prayer was answered, and his heart had something around which to cling, until his brain had time to recu-

perate from the prostration of its fearful agony. And so he blessed the name of God, and when relief came to him, he turned his powerful pen to battle only for the true, the noble, and the right. When the mysterious child of the sun came no more back to him, and time, the great healer, had reconciled him to his loss, he was wont to sit in the starlight beside the beautiful woman who loved him, and in the calm lustre of the celestial and pure planets, speculate upon the form of the child's final coming, when the starry veil up there shall be rent, and finite eyes shall gaze into the secrets of the infinite.

THE END.



G. W. Carleton.

G. W. Dillingham.



*"There is a kind of physiognomy in the titles
of books no less than in the faces of
men, by which a skilful observer
will know as well what to ex-
pect from the one as the
other."—BUTLER.*



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